R. TETTENHORST
P. O. Box 14020
Saint Louis, Missouri 63178

February 2, 1998

VIA FAX (402-463-6784)

Dr. Harry Salyards

Dear Harry:

I enjoyed speaking with you yesterday. Enclosed is an intermediate draft of the article for the March issue of Penny-Wise. I would appreciate getting your reaction as follows:

1) Is it too long, either for Penny-Wise or for the reader? If so, any editorial suggestions as to where it might be tightened would be welcome.

2) Does the alternating regular type and bold type technique maintain the chronological flow while adequately separating known events from my speculation?

3) As editor, do you have any other suggestions?

In addition to the addresses given at the end of the article, I have the following phone and fax numbers:

Office phone - 314-331-6503
fax - 314-331-6507
Home phone - 314-721-1115
fax - 314-721-6015

Thanks very much, Harry.

Sincerely,

Tett

R. Tettenhorst

mb

Attachment

THREE NEW SUBVARIETIES OF HALF CENTS? A SPECULATION

The Thin Planchet Lettered Edge specimens of 1794-1795. What are they?

I) Background

Two basic types of Liberty Cap half cents have been recognized ever since early U. S. coins were first studied. These are the heavier weight, thick planchet issues of 1793-1795, and the lighter weight, thin planchet issues of 1795-1797. The thick planchet issues have a lettered edge reading "TWO HUNDRED FOR A DOLLAR" and had an official weight of 104 grains. During 1795, Congress passed legislation authorizing the shift to lighter weight copper coinage. The thin planchet issues, with a few exceptions, were made with plain edges, presumably because there was not enough room on the thinner edge for the letters to be placed neatly. The new official standard weight was 84 grains. Liberty Cap large cents are similarly divided into corresponding categories.

As numismatists began studying and collecting half cents, it was realized that there was an additional small category. Some of the 1797 thin planchet specimens of the third variety (Cohen 3, Breen 3, Gilbert 2) had a lettered edge. Gilbert gave this a different variety number, G1. However, current terminology is to refer to this as a subvariety, C3b and B3a, since the obverse and reverse dies are both the same as for the more common plain edge variety. Later, a few specimens of a third edge type, the gripped edge, were recognized and given the subvariety designation, C3c and B3b. It is the possible expansion of this thin planchet lettered edge category to include three new subvarieties that is the subject of this article.

First, however, the history of other weight and edge combinations previously recognized should be completed. There are a number of thick planchet specimens known with plain edges. These can be divided into three types, as follows:

a) Gilbert described his variety 1795 G2 as having the same obverse and reverse dies as his G1, but with a plain edge instead of the lettered edge of G1. This is now known as having been an alteration. It was simply a G1 which had its edges ground down until the lettering disappeared. I found such a specimen in a dealer's junk box in 1985. I recall mischievously telling a fellow variety collector that I had "cherry-picked" my last missing Gilbert variety for $15!

b) The Parmelee Sale in 1890 contained an example of a 1795 half cent of the variety now known as C5b which was struck on a thick planchet cut from a spoiled large cent. A number of others have since been identified. Similarly, in 1953, Roger Cohen realized that certain specimens of his variety C6 were much above the standard weight because they also were struck on planchets cut from spoiled large cents. These he called his subvariety C6b. Breen utilizes the same subvariety designation for these coins as his B5b and B6b.

c) A very few 1794 half cents are known without edge letters. These are simply considered to be errors. They are coins struck on planchets which somehow . did not go through the edge lettering device go through the edge lettering device.

II) Specimens under consideration now

In 1963, a 1795 G1 (which is also C1 and B1) appeared in the fixed price sale by Stacks of the outstanding Brobston collection of half cents. It was there described as a light-weight specimen weighing 77.3 grains. Roger Cohen bought it, and it appeared in Superior's 1993 auction of Roger's half cent collection as lot 42. The description was essentially the same as in the Brobston catalogue. This was the only thin planchet lettered edge half cent of 1794 or 1795 known to either Roger or Walter. Both of them considered it to be simply an error, meaning that it was unintentionally struck on a planchet that was accidentally light in weight.

Since I have had a long-standing interest in half cent errors, I began looking about fifteen years ago to see if there were any other such specimens. Gradually others came to my attention. I am now aware of ten thin planchet lettered edge half cents of 1794 and 1795. As the pattern of these specimens emerged, it caused me to doubt whether these are simply errors, and to consider whether their nature could be something quite different. The evidence of these ten coins strongly suggests to me that these could have been trial pieces intended to determine an appropriate weight for the newly authorized lighter weight half cents. In accordance with the thrifty practice then in use at the mint, they were placed into circulation after they had served their originally intended purpose.

The ten specimens now known to me are as follows:

1) 1794 C9 VG 80.7gr
2) 1794 C9 G 87.2gr
3) 1794 C9 VG 85.6gr
4) 1795 C1 AG 91.5gr
5) 1795 C1 G 92.7gr
6) 1795 C1 G 77.3gr (The Brobston-Cohen coin)
7) 1795 C1 G 95.7gr (Grellman Dooley sale #794)
8) 1795 C2 G 81.1gr
9) 1795 C2 Fr 81.6gr (EAC 1997 sale #53)
10) 1795 C2 VG 88.9gr

III) The alternatives

It seems to me that these specimens can be classified in three different ways:

a) They are simply errors struck on unintentionally thin light weight planchets. What is Tett getting so worked up about?
b) They are trial pieces intended to test various possible weights for the newly authorized

lighter weight half cents. They were subsequently placed in circulation. As a separate question, they could be considered a subvariety as Breen does for the 1856 copper-nickel patterns, his B2b and B2c. Or they could be classified as "other half cents, as Cohen does.

c) They are something else of not yet explained nature.

IV) The case for the trial piece alternative

Quantity: Estimates of the percentage of originally minted Liberty Cap half cents which have survived until the present time. My recollection is that most have been in the range of 1% to 2%. Breen, for example, on page 139 arrives at an estimate of 1.86%,which he characterizes as "a generous estimate." There would have been no reason for anyone, even a numismatist, to have made any special effort to save one of these thin planchet lettered edge half cents. In fact, the low grade of the ten survivors indicates that they did not benefit from any preservation efforts, at least until this century. Therefore, taking the reciprocal of the survival percentage indicates that somewhere in the range of 500 to 1000 might originally have been struck As more such specimens are discovered now that a question as to their nature has arisen, application of the survival reciprocal will increase the estimated range of originally issued coins.

Motivation: There would be no gain for the makers of half cent planchets to sell the U. S. mint short weight planchets, since the planchets were purchased by the pound. Thinner planchets would have meant more work cutting planchets out of strip for the same amount of money. Similarly, I can find no record in the literature to indicate that the mint took it upon itself to make thinner planchets in order to save money on copper. Certainly Mint Director Elias Boudinot was keenly aware that the cost of making half cents and large cents at the old standard weight exceeded the face value of the coins. (See correspondence quoted in Breen, pp 123 – 126) But it is also clear that his reaction was to request legislation to reduce the authorized standard weight.

Custom: We know that copper trial pieces were made in the 1794-5 time period, and that the copper was placed into circulation. Three half cents of variety 1795 C6 are in existence today which were struck on planchets cut from copper trial pieces for dies of for three different varieties of half dollars of 1794 and 1795. The half cents are well circulated. Certainly if three survive today there must have been many more originally struck. If trial pieces for new dies were considered worth striking, then something as fundamental as a weight reduction to thinner planchets would seem to have required testing. Given the involvement of Congress and the President in authorizing such a change, it does not seem unreasonable that quantities of trial pieces would have been made and distributed. The evidence of the half dollar trial would imply that the mint would have placed any remaining half cents into circulation. The other recipients might well have done the same.

Timing: This is the strongest evidence in support of the trial piece theory. Note that all ten of the known thin planchet lettered edge specimens are from the last three of the lettered edge varieties of 1794 –1795, namely 1794 C9, 1795 C1, and 1795 C2. The significance of

this is that these are the three varieties struck after Congress passed and the President signed legislation authorizing a substantial reduction in the weight of the copper coinage, but before the actual new standard weight was decided. This is precisely the period in which trial pieces of various lighter weights would have been struck, in order to make a recommendation as to a precise new standard. No similar group of such light weight half cents is known for any 1794 varieties struck before the legislation authorizing them was enacted.

A more detailed chronology of the relevant events follows. (The regular type indicates previously known events, with page numbers preceded by a "B-" indicating the page in Breen describing the event. A page number preceded by a "C-" indicates a reference to Cohen's second edition. The **boldface** type represents my speculation as to what additional events took place with respect to these presumed trial pieces.)

July 8, 1794 The last regular coins dated 1794 are delivered by the mint. B-85 and C-17. The final variety is C9, also listed as B9. Subsequently war in Europe and the playing out of the Anglesey copper mines in Wales causes a significant increase in the price of copper. B-125.

Late 1794 or early 1795 To support a recommendation to Congress that the weight of the copper coins be reduced, a number of half cent planchets are created at various weights substantially less than the 104 grain standard. The planchets have their edges lettered, following the usual practice. These are then struck, using the last pair of half cent dies in existence, namely those for 1794 C9. No similar experiment for large cents is deemed necessary, because existing half cents show clearly that planchets thinner than the existing large cents can produce satisfactory striking quantity. Enough are made to give at least one to each member of Congress.

March 3, 1795 Congress passes an act authorizing the President to reduce the weight of the copper coins. The minimum weight of the half cents is set at one pennyweight, or 24 grains. The minimum weight for cents is set at two pennyweights.

Mid 1795 No further half cents are struck. B-123 and C-24.

Oct – Dec 1795 The first half cents dated 1795 are struck. These are believed to be the thick planchet lettered edge varieties, C1 and C2a. B-123 and C-24. **Additional thin planchet lettered edge specimens are again struck to support Boudinot's continuing efforts to get the lighter weight copper coins approved by President Washington. The process is the same as with the 1794 dated coins. These specimens are struck at various times, some using each of the two 1795 die combinations, C1 and C2.**

Dec 3, 1795 In his report to the President, Boudinot specifically recommends the weight of the cents be set at seven pennyweights (168 grains). The recommendation is supported with detailed financial calculations. B-123-4. Implicitly the corresponding weight for half cents would be set at 84 grains.

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Dec 11, 1795 Boudinot sends a long reply to Jefferson, answering his questions and giving additional detailed calculations. B-125-6.

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Dec 27, 1795 President Washington orders that the recommended new weight be approved. B-126.

Dec 28, 1795 The first of the new standard copper coins are struck, with thinner planchets and plain edges. These are large cents, Sheldon 76. B-126.

Jan-Jun, 1796 Thin planchet plain edge half cents dated 1795 are produced. These are varieties C2b,3,4,5,and 6. The Breen varieties are numbered the same. B-138-9 and C-26. These conclusions were first published by Cohen, and later repeated by Breen.

V) Request for information and opinions

1. Does anyone know of other specimens of thin planchet lettered edge half cents of 1794 or 1795? These could be of the three varieties discussed above, or of other varieties of those years. If available, what are their weights and pedigrees?
2. Does anyone know of any correspondence to or from the mint which says or implies that a number of trial pieces of half cents at lighter weights were made in summer or fall of 1795?
3. What are the coins listed above? Are they simply error coins, or trial pieces, or something else? What does the evidence suggest to you?
4. As a matter of semantics, should these be referred to as subvarieties or not? We do not seem to have a consistent and universally accepted set of criteria. Population is not a criterion. 1794 C4b, B4a is unique, yet both authors and other collectors identify it as a subvariety. Undertype is not consistently applied. Both authors and all collectors consider the 1795 #5 and #6 struck on planchets cut from error large cents to be

subvarieties, but the same planchet source for half cents dated 1797 and 1800 is not yet accorded subvariety status. Neither does weight explain the different treatment of these years. Cohen does not consider planchets cut from Talbot Allum & Lee to be grounds for considering coins struck on them to be of a subvariety, but Breen does. The prevailing practice seems to follow Cohen. And while both authors accord subvariety status to 1795 half cents struck over error large cents, neither does so to those struck over error half cents Breen lists the 1956 copper-nickel pattern as a subvariety. Cohen does not, relegating it to his category of "other half cents." And their different treatment of proof-only issues is well known. The intentional creation of differences, as opposed to errors, does not explain the differing subvariety treatment of undertypes of varying kinds and dates. Different edge lettering, or its presence or absence always creates a subvariety, but some of the other accepted subvarieties listed above do not earn their status in that way. So, what are the criteria for subvariety status? Should consistency or custom rule? Should these thin planchet lettered edge half cents be regarded as subvarieties 1794 C9b, 1795 C1b, and 1795 C2c? How say you now, EAC members?

I would welcome all input on these or other related questions, either through the pages of Penny-Wise, by mail to PO Box 14020, St. Louis, Mo. 63178, or by e-mail addressed to halfcent@aol,com.

R. TETTENHORST
P. O. Box 14020
Saint Louis, Missouri 63178

Feb 4, 1998

Harry,

Here is the final draft (but certainly not the last word!) on the subject of thin planchet lettered edge half cents. Any editor's suggestions would be welcome.

Tett

As you will see, there have been a couple of additions and a number of corrections and deletions from the first draft I sent you.

Feb 5, 1998

Jon, (Lusk)

Here is an advance article about the thin planchet lettered edge specimens. Your coin, of course, is #10. What do you think?

Tett

FROM THE DESK OF R. TETTENHORST

Feb 5, 1998

Frank (Wilkinson)

Here is an advance copy of an article I wrote for Penny Wise. Were you the author of the comments on lot 42 in the sale of Roger's collection? Any reaction to the article?

Tett

FROM THE DESK OF R. TETTENHORST

EPN

An advance copy of an article I wrote for Penny Wise.

Tett

FROM THE DESK OF R. TETTENHORST

Feb 5, 1998

Bill, (Weber)

Here is an advance copy of my article on 94 9b, 95 1b, + and 95 2c. In your role as DFK (Distinguished Faces Kicker) of EAC, your comments would be welcome!

Tett

FROM THE DESK OF R. TETTENHORST

1/98 (1)

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I) Background

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As numismatists began studying and collecting half cents, it was realized that there was an additional small category. Some of the 1797 thin planchet specimens of the third variety (Cohen 3, Breen 3, Gilbert 2) had a lettered edge. Gilbert gave this a different variety number, G1. However, current terminology is to refer to this as a subvariety, C3b and B3a, since the obverse and reverse dies are both the same as for the more common plain edge variety. In the sale of the H. Rogers collection in 1881 a different edge device, now known as the gripped edge, was first noted. (See Breen, p. 190) Still extremely rare, this has been given the subvariety designation, C3c and B3b. It is the possible expansion of this thin planchet lettered edge category to include three new subvarieties that is the subject of this article.

First, however, the history of other weight and edge combinations previously recognized should be completed. There are a number of thick planchet specimens known with plain edges. These can be divided into three types, as follows:

a) Gilbert described his variety 1795 G2 as having the same obverse and reverse dies as his G1, but with a plain edge instead of the lettered edge of G1. This is now known as having been an alteration. It was simply a G1 which had its edges ground down until the lettering disappeared. I found such a specimen in a dealer's junk box in 1985. I recall mischievously telling a fellow variety collector that I had "cherry-picked" my last missing Gilbert variety, probably R7, for $15!

b) The Parmelee Sale in 1890 contained an example of a 1795 half cent of the variety now known as C5b which was struck on a thick planchet cut from a spoiled large cent. A number of others have since been identified. Similarly, in 1953, Roger Cohen realized that certain specimens of his variety C6 were much above the standard weight because they also were struck on planchets cut from spoiled large cents. These he called his subvariety C6b. Breen utilizes the

same subvariety designation for these coins as his B5b and B6b.

c) A very few 1794 half cents are known without edge letters. These are simply considered to be errors. They are coins struck on planchets which somehow did not go through the edge lettering device.

II) Specimens under consideration now

In 1963, a 1795 G1 (which is also C1 and B1) appeared in the fixed price sale by Stacks of the outstanding Brobston collection of half cents. It was there described as a light-weight specimen weighing 77.3 grains. The comment was added, "Perhaps the only specimen in existence. We do not know of another 1795 thin planchet lettered edge half cent! Extremely rare." Roger Cohen bought it, and it appeared in Superior's 1993 auction of Roger's half cent collection as lot 42. The description was essentially the same as in the Brobston catalogue. A possible explanation was offered, "Perhaps it was cut down from some other copper stock, or perhaps the copper strip (from which planchets were cut) went through the rolling mills a few extra times, making it far too thin and thus making all planchets underweight." This was the only thin planchet lettered edge half cent of 1794 or 1795 known to either Roger or Walter at the time they wrote their respective books. Both of them considered it to be simply an error, meaning that it was unintentionally struck on a planchet that was accidentally light in weight. In discussing this coin, Breen offers this explanation, "This coin is probably the same one from Mehl's sale, November 28, 1939, lot 257, then to John Pawling, and later to Brobston….No duplicate has been reported. In all likelihood, it is not an intentional subvariety, and it shows no trace of overstriking on any other coin. Probably this planchet was cut from a single strip, which had been rolled too thin."

Since I have had a long-standing interest in half cent errors, I began looking about fifteen years ago to see if there were any other such specimens. Gradually others came to my attention. I am now aware of ten thin planchet lettered edge half cents of 1794 and 1795. As the pattern of these specimens emerged, it caused me to doubt whether these are simply errors, and to consider whether their nature could be something quite different. The evidence of these ten coins strongly suggests to me that these could have been trial pieces intended to determine an appropriate weight for the newly authorized lighter weight half cents. In accordance with the thrifty practice then in use at the mint, they were placed into circulation after they had served their originally intended purpose.

The ten specimens now known to me are as follows:

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It seems to me that these specimens can be classified in three different ways:

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Quantity: Estimates have been made of the percentage of originally minted Liberty Cap half cents which have survived until the present time. My recollection is that most of these estimates have been in the range of 1% to 2%. Breen, for example, on page 139 arrives at an estimate of 1.86%,which he characterizes as "a generous estimate." There would have been no reason for anyone, even a numismatist, to have made any special effort to save one of these thin planchet lettered edge half cents. In fact, the low grade of the ten survivors indicates that they did not benefit from any preservation efforts, at least until this century. Therefore, taking the reciprocal of the survival percentage indicates that somewhere in the range of 500 to 1000 might originally have been struck As more such specimens are discovered now that a question as to their nature has arisen, application of the survival reciprocal will increase the estimated range of originally issued coins.

Motivation: There would be no gain for the makers of half cent planchets to sell the U. S. mint short weight planchets, since the planchets were purchased by the pound. Thinner planchets would have meant more work cutting planchets out of strip for the same amount of money. Similarly, I can find no record in the literature to indicate that the mint took it upon itself to make thinner planchets in order to save money on copper. Certainly Mint Director Elias Boudinot was keenly aware that the cost of making half cents and large cents at the old standard weight exceeded the face value of the coins. (See correspondence quoted in Breen, pp 123 – 126) But it is also clear that his reaction was to request legislation to reduce the authorized standard weight.

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three of these trial pieces survive today as undertypes there must have been many more originally struck. If trial pieces for new dies were considered worth striking, then something as fundamental as a weight reduction to thinner planchets would seem to have required testing. Given the involvement of Congress and the President in authorizing such a change, it does not seem unreasonable that quantities of trial pieces would have been made and distributed. The evidence of the half dollar trial pieces would imply that the mint would have placed any remaining half cents into circulation. The other recipients might well have done the same.

Timing: This is the strongest evidence in support of the trial piece theory. Note that all ten of the known thin planchet lettered edge specimens are from the last three of the lettered edge varieties of 1794 –1795, namely 1794 C9, 1795 C1, and 1795 C2. The significance of this is that these are the three varieties struck after Congress passed and the President signed legislation authorizing a substantial reduction in the weight of the copper coinage, but before the actual new standard weight was decided. This is precisely the period in which trial pieces of various lighter weights would have been struck, in order to make a recommendation as to a precise new standard. No similar group of such light weight half cents is known for any 1794 varieties struck before the legislation authorizing them was enacted.
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Late 1794 or early 1795 To support a recommendation to Congress that the weight of the copper coins be reduced, a number of half cent planchets are created at various weights substantially less than the 104 grain standard. The planchets have their edges lettered, following the usual practice. These are then struck, using the last pair of half cent dies in existence, namely those for 1794 C9. Enough are made to give at least one to each member of Congress. Sheldon (p. 145-6) notes similar large cents made about this time, and offers a different hypothesis: "Apparently the change to the thin planchets preceded the abandonment of the edge lettering, as a few examples are found with a comparatively thin planchet and lettered edge." However this explanation seems to ignore the evidence of the half cents. If edge lettering was discontinued for the large cents in December of 1795 (see chronology below), why would it have been retained for the first half cents struck on much thinner planchets in early 1796, and for a few of each of the first two varieties? How does this scenario explain the thin planchet 1794 C9's?

March 3, 1795 Congress passes an act authorizing the President to reduce the weight of the copper coins. The minimum weight of the half cents is set at one pennyweight, or 24 grains. The minimum weight for cents is set at two pennyweights.

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2. Does anyone know of any correspondence to or from the mint which says or implies that a number of trial pieces of half cents at lighter weights were made in summer or fall of 1795?
3. What are the coins listed above? Are they simply error coins, or trial pieces, or something else? What does the evidence suggest to you?
4. As a matter of semantics, should these be referred to as subvarieties or not? Socrates is reported to have said, "The definition of terms is the beginning of wisdom." Yet we do not seem to have a consistent and universally accepted definition of the term "subvariety." Population is not a criterion. 1794 C4b, B4a is unique, yet both authors and other collectors identify it as a subvariety. Undertype is not consistently applied. Both authors and all collectors consider the 1795 #5 and #6 struck on planchets cut from error large cents to be subvarieties, but the same planchet source for half cents dated 1797 and 1800 is not yet accorded subvariety status. Neither does weight explain the different treatment of these years. Cohen does not consider planchets cut from Talbot Allum & Lee to be grounds for considering coins struck on them to be of a subvariety, but Breen does. The prevailing practice seems to follow Cohen. And while both authors accord subvariety status to 1795 half cents struck over error large cents, neither does so to those struck over error half cents Breen lists the 1956 copper-nickel pattern as a subvariety. Cohen does not, relegating it to his category of "other half cents." And their different treatment of proof-only issues is well known. The intentional creation of differences, as opposed to errors, does not explain the differing subvariety treatment of undertypes of varying kinds and dates. Different edge lettering, or its presence or absence always creates a subvariety, but some of the other accepted subvarieties listed above do not earn their status in that way. So, what are the criteria for subvariety status? Should consistency or custom rule? Should these thin planchet lettered edge half cents be regarded as subvarieties 1794 C9b, 1795 C1b, and 1795 C2c? How say you now, EAC members?

I would welcome all input on these or other related questions, either through the pages of Penny-Wise, by mail to PO Box 14020, St. Louis, Mo. 63178, or by e-mail addressed to halfcent@aol,com.

THREE NEW SUBVARIETIES OF HALF CENTS? A SPECULATION

The Thin Planchet Lettered Edge specimens of 1794-1795. What are they?

I) Background

Two basic types of Liberty Cap half cents have been recognized ever since early U. S. coins were first studied. These are the heavier weight, thick planchet issues of 1793-1795, and the lighter weight, thin planchet issues of 1795-1797. The thick planchet issues have a lettered edge reading "TWO HUNDRED FOR A DOLLAR" and had an official weight of 104 grains. During 1795, Congress passed legislation authorizing the shift to lighter weight copper coinage. The thin planchet issues, with a few exceptions, were made with plain edges, presumably because there was not enough room on the thinner edge for the letters to be placed neatly. The new official standard weight was 84 grains. Liberty Cap large cents are similarly divided into corresponding categories.

As numismatists began studying and collecting half cents, it was realized that there was an additional small category. Some of the 1797 thin planchet specimens of the third variety (Cohen 3, Breen 3, Gilbert 2) had a lettered edge. Gilbert gave this a different variety number, G1. However, current terminology is to refer to this as a subvariety, C3b and B3a, since the obverse and reverse dies are both the same as for the more common plain edge variety. Later, a few specimens of a third edge type, the gripped edge, were recognized and given the subvariety designation, C3c and B3b. It is the possible expansion of this thin planchet lettered edge category to include three new subvarieties that is the subject of this article.

First, however, the history of other weight and edge combinations previously recognized should be completed. There are a number of thick planchet specimens known with plain edges. These can be divided into three types, as follows:

a) Gilbert described his variety 1795 G2 as having the same obverse and reverse dies as his G1, but with a plain edge instead of the lettered edge of G1. This is now known as having been an alteration. It was simply a G1 which had its edges ground down until the lettering disappeared. I found such a specimen in a dealer's junk box in 1985. I recall mischievously telling a fellow variety collector that I had "cherry-picked" my last missing Gilbert variety for $15!

b) The Parmelee Sale in 1890 contained an example of a 1795 half cent of the variety now known as C5b which was struck on a thick planchet cut from a spoiled large cent. A number of others have since been identified. Similarly, in 1953, Roger Cohen realized that certain specimens of his variety C6 were much above the standard weight because they also were struck on planchets cut from spoiled large cents. These he called his subvariety C6b. Breen utilizes the same subvariety designation for these coins as his B5b and B6b.

c) A very few 1794 half cents are known without edge letters. These are simply considered to be errors. They are coins struck on planchets which somehow did not go through the edge lettering device ~~go through the edge lettering device.~~

II) Specimens under consideration now

In 1963, a 1795 G1 (which is also C1 and B1) appeared in the fixed price sale by Stacks of the outstanding Brobston collection of half cents. It was there described as a light-weight specimen weighing 77.3 grains. Roger Cohen bought it, and it appeared in Superior's 1993 auction of Roger's half cent collection as lot 42. The description was essentially the same as in the Brobston catalogue. This was the only thin planchet lettered edge half cent of 1794 or 1795 known to either Roger or Walter. Both of them considered it to be simply an error, meaning that it was unintentionally struck on a planchet that was accidentally light in weight.

Since I have had a long-standing interest in half cent errors, I began looking about fifteen years ago to see if there were any other such specimens. Gradually others came to my attention. I am now aware of ten thin planchet lettered edge half cents of 1794 and 1795. As the pattern of these specimens emerged, it caused me to doubt whether these are simply errors, and to consider whether ~~their nature could be something quite different. The evidence of these ten coins strongly suggests to me that~~ these could have been trial pieces intended to determine an appropriate weight for the newly authorized lighter weight half cents. In accordance with the thrifty practice then in use at the mint, they were placed into circulation after they had served their originally intended purpose.

italicize or underline

The ten specimens now known to me are as follows:

1) 1794 C9 VG 80.7gr
2) 1794 C9 G 87.2gr
3) 1794 C9 VG 85.6gr
4) 1795 C1 AG 91.5gr
5) 1795 C1 G 92.7gr
6) 1795 C1 G 77.3gr (The Brobston-Cohen coin)
7) 1795 C1 G 95.7gr (Grellman Dooley sale #794)
8) 1795 C2 G 81.1gr
9) 1795 C2 Fr 81.6gr (EAC 1997 sale #53)
10) 1795 C2 VG 88.9gr

III) The alternatives

It seems to me that these specimens can be classified in three different ways:

a) They are simply errors struck on unintentionally thin light weight planchets. What is Tett getting so worked up about?
b) They are trial pieces intended to test various possible weights for the newly authorized

lighter weight half cents. They were subsequently placed in circulation. As a separate question, they could be considered a subvariety as Breen does for the 1856 copper-nickel patterns, his B2b and B2c. Or they could be classified as "other half cents," as Cohen does.

c) They are something else ~~of not yet explained nature~~ as yet unexplained.

IV) The case for the trial piece alternative

Quantity: Estimates of the percentage of originally minted Liberty Cap half cents which have survived until the present time. My recollection is that most have been in the range of 1% to 2%. Breen, for example, on page 139 arrives at an estimate of 1.86%, which he characterizes as "a generous estimate." There would have been no reason for anyone, even a numismatist, to have made any special effort to save one of these thin planchet lettered edge half cents. In fact, the low grade of the ten survivors indicates that they did not benefit from any preservation efforts, at least until this century. Therefore, taking the reciprocal of the survival percentage indicates that somewhere in the range of 500 to 1000 might originally have been struck. As more such specimens are discovered now that a question as to their nature has arisen, application of the survival reciprocal will increase the estimated range of originally issued coins.

Motivation: There would be no gain for the makers of half cent planchets to sell the U. S. mint short weight planchets, since the planchets were purchased by the pound. Thinner planchets would have meant more work cutting planchets out of strip for the same amount of money. Similarly, I can find no record in the literature to indicate that the mint took it upon itself to make thinner planchets in order to save money on copper. Certainly Mint Director Elias Boudinot was keenly aware that the cost of making half cents and large cents at the old standard weight exceeded the face value of the coins. (See correspondence quoted in Breen, pp 123 – 126). But it is also clear that his reaction was to request legislation to reduce the authorized standard weight.

Custom: We know that copper trial pieces were made in the 1794-5 time period, and that the copper was placed into circulation. Three half cents of variety 1795 C6 are in existence today which were struck on planchets cut from copper trial pieces for dies of ~~the~~ three different varieties of half dollars of 1794 and 1795. The half cents are well circulated. Certainly if three survive today there must have been many more originally struck. If trial pieces for new dies were considered worth striking, then something as fundamental as a weight reduction to thinner planchets would seem to have required testing. Given the involvement of Congress and the President in authorizing such a change, it does not seem unreasonable that quantities of trial pieces would have been made and distributed. The evidence of the half dollar trial would imply that the mint would have placed any remaining half cents into circulation. The other recipients might well have done the same.

Timing: This is the strongest evidence in support of the trial piece theory. Note that all ten of the known thin planchet lettered edge specimens are from the last three of the lettered edge varieties of 1794 –1795, namely 1794 C9, 1795 C1, and 1795 C2. The significance of

this is that these are the three varieties struck after Congress passed and the President signed legislation authorizing a substantial reduction in the weight of the copper coinage, but before the actual new standard weight was decided. This is precisely the period in which trial pieces of various lighter weights would have been struck, in order to make a recommendation as to a precise new standard. No similar group of such light weight half cents is known for any 1794 varieties struck before the legislation authorizing them was enacted.

italicize or underline

A more detailed chronology of the relevant events follows. (The regular type indicates previously known events, with page numbers preceded by a "B-" indicating the page in Breen describing the event. A page number preceded by a "C-" indicates a reference to Cohen's second edition. The **boldface** type represents my speculation as to what additional events took place with respect to these presumed trial pieces.)

July 8, 1794: The last regular coins dated 1794 are delivered by the mint. B-85 and C-17. The final variety is C9, also listed as B9. Subsequently war in Europe and the playing out of the Anglesey copper mines in Wales causes a significant increase in the price of copper. B-125.

maybe it was just the glass of cognac I was drinking, but despite the preliminary comments, I found this confusing: were you used to "B-" meaning a coin variety: "B-85?"!

Late 1794 or early 1795: To support a recommendation to Congress that the weight of the copper coins be reduced, a number of half cent planchets are created at various weights substantially less than the 104 grain standard. The planchets have their edges lettered, following the usual practice. These are then struck, using the last pair of half cent dies in existence, namely those for 1794 C9. No similar experiment for large cents is deemed necessary, because existing half cents show clearly that planchets thinner than the existing large cents can produce satisfactory striking quantity. Enough are made to give at least one to each member of Congress.

March 3, 1795: Congress passes an act authorizing the President to reduce the weight of the copper coins. The ~~maximum~~ authorized reduction in weight of the half cents is set at one pennyweight, or 24 grains. The ~~maximum~~ authorized reduction in weight for cents is set at two pennyweights. (Section 8 of the Act.)

Mid 1795: No further half cents are struck. B-123 and C-24.

Oct – Dec 1795: The first half cents dated 1795 are struck. These are believed to be the thick planchet lettered edge varieties, C1 and C2a. B-123 and C-24. **Additional thin planchet lettered edge specimens are again struck to support Boudinot's continuing efforts to get the lighter weight copper coins approved by President Washington. The process is the same as with the 1794 dated coins. These specimens are struck at various times, some using each of the two 1795 die combinations, C1 and C2.**

Dec 3, 1795: In his report to the President, Boudinot specifically recommends the weight of the cents be set at seven pennyweights (168 grains). The recommendation is supported with detailed financial calculations. B-123-4. Implicitly the corresponding weight for half cents would be set at 84 grains.

I think it's going to have to be spelled out – "Breen, p.85", "Cohen, page 17."

Dec 9, 1795: Having just purchased a supply of copper at a high price, Boudinot writes Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson again urging that the new standard for cents be set at 168 grains. Further calculations are included. ~~B-124.~~ Breen, p 124.

Dec 10, 1795: Jefferson immediately replied with a series of questions. ~~B-125.~~ Breen, p. 125.

Dec 11, 1795: Boudinot sends a long reply to Jefferson, answering his questions and giving additional detailed calculations. ~~B-125-6.~~ Breen pp. 125-6.

Mid-Dec 1795: Upon closer inspection, Boudinot realizes that, although the obverse and reverse of the thinner half cents have received completely satisfactory impressions, the edges have not. The thinner edges do not have enough width for all the lettering to stay completely on the edge. Some letters run off or nearly off the edge, producing tiny nick-like marks on the rims. These are deemed unacceptable. After discussion of the problem it is realized that the necessity for edge devices on coins is primarily to prevent surreptitious filing of the edges to gain free bullion dust, and that this protection is not needed for copper coins. So the decision is made that the new lighter weight copper coins will have plain edges.

Dec 27, 1795: President Washington orders that the recommended new weight be approved. B-126. Breen, p. 126.

Dec 28, 1795: The first of the new standard copper coins are struck, with thinner planchets and plain edges. These are large cents, Sheldon 76. B-126. Breen, p. 126.

Jan-Jun, 1796: Thin planchet plain edge half cents dated 1795 are produced. These are varieties C2b,3,4,5,and 6. The Breen varieties are numbered the same. B-138-9 and C-26. These conclusions were first published by Cohen, and later repeated by Breen. Breen pp. 138-9, Cohen p. 26.

V) Request for Information and opinions

1. Does anyone know of other specimens of thin planchet lettered edge half cents of 1794 or 1795? These could be of the three varieties discussed above, or of other varieties of those years. If available, what are their weights and pedigrees?
2. Does anyone know of any correspondence to or from the mint which says or implies that a number of trial pieces of half cents at lighter weights were made in summer or fall of 1795?
3. What are the coins listed above? Are they simply error coins, or trial pieces, or something else? What does the evidence suggest to you?
4. As a matter of semantics, should these be referred to as subvarieties or not? We do not seem to have a consistent and universally accepted set of criteria. Population is not a criterion. 1794 C4b, B4a is unique, yet both authors and other collectors identify it as a subvariety. Undertype is not consistently applied. Both authors and all collectors consider the 1795 #5 and #6 struck on planchets cut from error large cents to be

subvarieties, but the same planchet source for half cents dated 1797 and 1800 is not yet accorded subvariety status. Neither does weight explain the different treatment of these years. Cohen does not consider planchets cut from Talbot Allum & Lee to be grounds for considering coins struck on them to be of a subvariety, but Breen does. The prevailing practice seems to follow Cohen. And while both authors accord subvariety status to 1795 half cents struck over error large cents, neither does so to those struck over error half cents Breen lists the 1856 copper-nickel pattern as a subvariety. Cohen does not, relegating it to his category of "other half cents." And their different treatment of proof-only issues is well known. The intentional creation of differences, as opposed to errors, does not explain the differing subvariety treatment of undertypes of varying kinds and dates. Different edge lettering, or its presence or absence, always creates a subvariety, but some of the other accepted subvarieties listed above do not earn their status in that way. So, what are the criteria for subvariety status? Should consistency or custom rule? Should these thin planchet lettered edge half cents be regarded as subvarieties 1794 C9b, 1795 C1b, and 1795 C2c? How say you now, EAC members?

I would welcome all input on these or other related questions, either through the pages of Penny-Wise, by mail to PO Box 14020, St. Louis, Mo. 63178, or by e-mail addressed to halfcent@aol.com.

Kkkkk etc.

8 pgs total

nb

2/4/98

Dear Tett,

No it's not too long.

Yes, I think the "bold-facing" technique works O.K. I doubt that any original congressional correspondence concerning the issue exists. Unlike our unhappy present, with 24-hour, wall-to-wall coverage of everything that's said in Congress, & by Congressmen and Congresswomen outside of Congress, the early records are shockingly succinct. I am a copy of the Journal of the Senate for that session of Nov. 3, 1794 - March 3, 1795 and the entire mention of the ultimate "Act" of 3/3/95

occupies about 3 scattered lines!

I made a number of other editorial suggestions — mainly a couple of sections of italics, to highlight crucial points in your argument as I see it; and — most of the "chicken-scratchings" on the third — and second-to-last pages, to suggest that you use "Breen, p. 126," e.g., and not "B-126": (Wow: what variety is that!?)

If you can get me clean copy back by the 16th or 17th, we'll get it into the March issue!

J'attends avec impatience à vous revoir à Boston!

— Harry.

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If you can get me clean copy back by the 16th or 17th, we'll get it into the March issue!

J'attends avec impatience à vous revoir à Boston!

— Barry.

Memo from

HARRY E. SALYARDS JR, M.D.

Monday 2/9

Tett —

I'm certain our drafts crossed in the mail —

Overall, it is better, but I'd still "tidy up" at the points suggested.

— Harry.

(1)

THREE NEW SUBVARIETIES OF HALF CENTS? A SPECULATION

please add your name, as author → X

The Thin Planchet Lettered Edge specimens of 1794-1795. What are they?

I) Background

Two basic types of Liberty Cap half cents have been recognized ever since early U. S. coins were first studied. These are the heavier weight, thick planchet issues of 1793-1795, and the lighter weight, thin planchet issues of 1795-1797. The thick planchet issues have a lettered edge reading "TWO HUNDRED FOR A DOLLAR" and had an official weight of 104 grains. During 1795, Congress passed legislation authorizing the shift to lighter weight copper coinage. The thin planchet issues, with a few exceptions, were made with plain edges, presumably because there was not enough room on the thinner edge for the letters to be placed neatly. The new official standard weight was 84 grains. Liberty Cap large cents are similarly divided into corresponding categories.

As numismatists began studying and collecting half cents, it was realized that there was an additional small category. Some of the 1797 thin planchet specimens of the third variety (Cohen 3, Breen 3, Gilbert 2) had a lettered edge. Gilbert gave this a different variety number, G1. However, current terminology is to refer to this as a subvariety, C3b and B3a, since the obverse and reverse dies are both the same as for the more common plain edge variety. In the sale of the H. Rogers collection in 1881 a different edge device, now known as the gripped edge, was first noted. (See Breen, p. 190) Still extremely rare, this has been given the subvariety designation, C3c and B3b. It is the possible expansion of this thin planchet lettered edge category to include three new subvarieties that is the subject of this article.

I'd put this in parentheses and move this back to precede the parenthesis. otherwise, the real focus of the article is broken up by the intervening comment about the gripped edge subvariety.

First, however, the history of other weight and edge combinations previously recognized should be completed. There are a number of thick planchet specimens known with plain edges. These can be divided into three types, as follows:

a) Gilbert described his variety 1795 G2 as having the same obverse and reverse dies as his G1, but with a plain edge instead of the lettered edge of G1. This is now known as having been an alteration. It was simply a G1 which had its edges ground down until the lettering disappeared. I found such a specimen in a dealer's junk box in 1985. I recall mischievously telling a fellow variety collector that I had "cherry-picked" my last missing Gilbert variety, probably R7, for $15!

b) The Parmelee Sale in 1890 contained an example of a 1795 half cent of the variety now known as C5b which was struck on a thick planchet cut from a spoiled large cent. A number of others have since been identified. Similarly, in 1953, Roger Cohen realized that certain specimens of his variety C6 were much above the standard weight because they also were struck on planchets cut from spoiled large cents. These he called his subvariety C6b. Breen utilizes the

same subvariety designation for these coins as his B5b and B6b.

c) A very few 1794 half cents are known without edge letters. These are simply considered to be errors. They are coins struck on planchets which somehow did not go through the edge lettering device.

II) Specimens under consideration now

In 1963, a 1795 G1 (which is also C1 and B1) appeared in the fixed price sale by Stacks of the outstanding Brobston collection of half cents. It was there described as a light-weight specimen weighing 77.3 grains. The comment was added, "Perhaps the only specimen in existence. We do not know of another 1795 thin planchet lettered edge half cent! Extremely rare." Roger Cohen bought it, and it appeared in Superior's 1993 auction of Roger's half cent collection as lot 42. The description was essentially the same as in the Brobston catalogue. A possible explanation was offered, "Perhaps it was cut down from some other copper stock, or perhaps the copper strip (from which planchets were cut) went through the rolling mills a few extra times, making it far too thin and thus making all planchets underweight." This was the only thin planchet lettered edge half cent of 1794 or 1795 known to either Roger or Walter at the time they wrote their respective books. Both of them considered it to be simply an error, meaning that it was unintentionally struck on a planchet that was accidentally light in weight. In discussing this coin, Breen offers this explanation, "This coin is probably the same one from Mehl's sale, November 28, 1939, lot 257, then to John Pawling, and later to Brobston….No duplicate has been reported. In all likelihood, it is not an intentional subvariety, and it shows no trace of overstriking on any other coin. Probably this planchet was cut from a single strip, which had been rolled too thin."

Since I have had a long-standing interest in half cent errors, I began looking about fifteen years ago to see if there were any other such specimens. Gradually others came to my attention. I am now aware of ten thin planchet lettered edge half cents of 1794 and 1795. As the pattern of these specimens emerged, it caused me to doubt whether these are simply errors, and to consider whether their nature could be something quite different. The evidence of these ten coins strongly suggests to me that these could have been trial pieces intended to determine an appropriate weight for the newly authorized lighter weight half cents. In accordance with the thrifty practice then in use at the mint, they were placed into circulation after they had served their originally intended purpose.

The ten specimens now known to me are as follows:

1) 1794 C9 VG 80.7gr
2) 1794 C9 G 87.2gr
3) 1794 C9 VG 85.6gr
4) 1795 C1 AG 91.5gr
5) 1795 C1 G 92.7gr
6) 1795 C1 G 77.3gr (The Brobston-Cohen coin)
7) 1795 C1 G 95.7gr (McCawley-Grellman sale 1/11/97 #794)
8) 1795 C2 G 81.1gr

9) 1795 C2 Fr 81.6gr (EAC 1997 sale #53)
10) 1795 C2 VG 88.9gr

III) The alternatives

It seems to me that these specimens can be classified in three different ways:

a) They are simply errors struck on unintentionally thin light weight planchets. What is Tett getting so worked up about?
b) They are trial pieces intended to test various possible weights for the newly authorized lighter weight half cents. They were subsequently placed in circulation. As a separate question, they could be considered a subvariety as Breen does for the 1856 copper-nickel patterns, his B2b and B2c. Or they could be classified as "other half cents", as Cohen does.
c) They are something else of not yet explained nature.

IV) The case for the trial piece alternative

as suggested on previous draft, I'd underline for emphasis → etc.

Quantity: Estimates have been made of the percentage of originally minted Liberty Cap half cents which have survived until the present time. My recollection is that most of these estimates have been in the range of 1% to 2%. Breen, for example, on page 139 arrives at an estimate of 1.86%,which he characterizes as "a generous estimate." There would have been no reason for anyone, even a numismatist, to have made any special effort to save one of these thin planchet lettered edge half cents. In fact, the low grade of the ten survivors indicates that they did not benefit from any preservation efforts, at least until this century. Therefore, taking the reciprocal of the survival percentage indicates that somewhere in the range of 500 to 1000 might originally have been struck As more such specimens are discovered now that a question as to their nature has arisen, application of the survival reciprocal will increase the estimated range of originally issued coins.

Motivation: There would be no gain for the makers of half cent planchets to sell the U. S. mint short weight planchets, since the planchets were purchased by the pound. Thinner planchets would have meant more work cutting planchets out of strip for the same amount of money. Similarly, I can find no record in the literature to indicate that the mint took it upon itself to make thinner planchets in order to save money on copper. Certainly Mint Director Elias Boudinot was keenly aware that the cost of making half cents and large cents at the old standard weight exceeded the face value of the coins. (See correspondence quoted in Breen, pp 123 – 126) But it is also clear that his reaction was to request legislation to reduce the authorized standard weight.

Custom: We know that copper trial pieces were made in the 1794-5 time period, and that the copper was placed into circulation. Three half cents of variety 1795 C6 are in existence today which were struck on planchets cut from copper trial pieces for dies of three different varieties of half dollars of 1794 and 1795. The half cents are well circulated. Certainly if

three of these trial pieces survive today as undertypes there must have been many more originally struck. If trial pieces for new dies were considered worth striking, then something as fundamental as a weight reduction to thinner planchets would seem to have required testing. Given the involvement of Congress and the President in authorizing such a change, it does not seem unreasonable that quantities of trial pieces would have been made and distributed. The evidence of the half dollar trial pieces would imply that the mint would have placed any remaining half cents into circulation. The other recipients might well have done the same.

Timing: This is the strongest evidence in support of the trial piece theory. Note that all ten of the known thin planchet lettered edge specimens are from the last three of the lettered edge varieties of 1794 –1795, namely 1794 C9, 1795 C1, and 1795 C2. The significance of this is that these are the three varieties struck after Congress passed and the President signed legislation authorizing a substantial reduction in the weight of the copper coinage, but before the actual new standard weight was decided. This is precisely the period in which trial pieces of various lighter weights would have been struck, in order to make a recommendation as to a precise new standard. No similar group of such light weight half cents is known for any 1794 varieties struck before the legislation authorizing them was enacted.

A more detailed chronology of the relevant events follows. (The regular type indicates previously known events, with page numbers preceded by a "B-" indicating the page in Breen describing the event. A page number preceded by a "C-" indicates a reference to Cohen's second edition. The **boldface** type represents my speculation as to what additional events took place with respect to these presumed trial pieces.)

either underline the date or add some punctuation

July 8, 1794 The last regular coins dated 1794 are delivered by the mint. B-85 and C-17. The final variety is C9, also listed as B9. Subsequently war in Europe and the playing out of the Anglesey copper mines in Wales causes a significant increase in the price of copper. B-125.

same criticism as on prev. draft.

(ditto all comparable passages to follow)

Late 1794 or early 1795 To support a recommendation to Congress that the weight of the copper coins be reduced, a number of half cent planchets are created at various weights substantially less than the 104 grain standard. The planchets have their edges lettered, following the usual practice. These are then struck, using the last pair of half cent dies in existence, namely those for 1794 C9. Enough are made to give at least one to each member of Congress. Sheldon (p. 145-6) notes similar large cents made about this time, and offers a different hypothesis: "Apparently the change to the thin planchets preceded the abandonment of the edge lettering, as a few examples are found with a comparatively thin planchet and lettered edge." However this explanation seems to ignore the evidence of the half cents. If edge lettering was discontinued for the large cents in December of 1795 (see chronology below), why would it have been retained for the first half cents struck on much thinner planchets in early 1796, and for a few of each of the first two varieties? How does this scenario explain the thin planchet 1794 C9's?

then

March 3, 1795 Congress passes an act authorizing the President to reduce the weight of the copper coins. The ~~minimum weight~~ of the half cents is set at one pennyweight, or 24 grains. The ~~minimum weight for~~ cents is set at two pennyweights.

Mid 1795 No further half cents are struck. B-123 and C-24.

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Dec 10, 1795 Jefferson immediately replies with a series of questions. B-125.

Dec 11, 1795 Boudinot sends a long reply to Jefferson, answering his questions and giving additional detailed calculations. B-125-6.

Mid-Dec 1795 Upon closer inspection, Boudinot realizes that, although the obverse and reverse of the thinner half cents have received completely satisfactory impressions, the edges have not. The thinner edges do not have enough width for all the lettering to stay completely on the edge. Some letters run off or nearly off the edge, producing tiny nick-like marks on the rims. These are deemed unacceptable. After discussion of the problem it is realized that the necessity for edge devices on coins is primarily to prevent surreptitious filing of the edges to gain free bullion dust, and that this protection is not needed for copper coins. So the decision is made that the new lighter weight copper coins will have plain edges.

Dec 27, 1795 President Washington orders that the recommended new weight be approved. B-126.

Dec 28, 1795 The first of the new standard copper coins are struck, with thinner planchets and plain edges. These are large cents, Sheldon 76b. B-126.

Jan-Jun, 1796 Thin planchet plain edge half cents dated 1795 are produced. These are varieties C2b,3,4,5,and 6. The Breen varieties are numbered the same. B-138-9 and C-26. These conclusions were first published by Cohen, and later repeated by Breen.

OK

6

V) Request for information and opinions

1. Does anyone know of other specimens of thin planchet lettered edge half cents of 1794 or 1795? These could be of the three varieties discussed above, or of other varieties of those years. If available, what are their weights and pedigrees?
2. Does anyone know of any correspondence to or from the mint which says or implies that a number of trial pieces of half cents at lighter weights were made in summer or fall of 1795?
3. What are the coins listed above? Are they simply error coins, or trial pieces, or something else? What does the evidence suggest to you?
4. As a matter of semantics, should these be referred to as subvarieties or not? Socrates is reported to have said, "The definition of terms is the beginning of wisdom." Yet we do not seem to have a consistent and universally accepted definition of the term "subvariety." Population is not a criterion. 1794 C4b, B4a is unique, yet both authors and other collectors identify it as a subvariety. Undertype is not consistently applied. Both authors and all collectors consider the 1795 #5 and #6 struck on planchets cut from error large cents to be subvarieties, but the same planchet source for half cents dated 1797 and 1800 is not yet accorded subvariety status. Neither does weight explain the different treatment of these years. Cohen does not consider planchets cut from Talbot Allum & Lee to be grounds for considering coins struck on them to be of a subvariety, but Breen does. The prevailing practice seems to follow Cohen. And while both authors accord subvariety status to 1795 half cents struck over error large cents, neither does so to those struck over error half cents Breen lists the 1956 copper-nickel pattern as a subvariety. Cohen does not, relegating it to his category of "other half cents." And their different treatment of proof-only issues is well known. The intentional creation of differences, as opposed to errors, does not explain the differing subvariety treatment of undertypes of varying kinds and dates. Different edge lettering, or its presence or absence always creates a subvariety, but some of the other accepted subvarieties listed above do not earn their status in that way. So, what are the criteria for subvariety status? Should consistency or custom rule? Should these thin planchet lettered edge half cents be regarded as subvarieties 1794 C9b, 1795 C1b, and 1795 C2c? How say you now, EAC members?

I would welcome all input on these or other related questions, either through the pages of Penny-Wise, by mail to PO Box 14020, St. Louis, Mo. 63178, or by e-mail addressed to halfcent@aol,com.

R. TETTENHORST
P. O. Box 14020
Saint Louis, Missouri 63178

February 10, 1998

Dr. Harry Salyards
606 N. Minnesota
Hastings, NE 68901-5297

Dear Harry:

Thank you very much for your thoughtful response to my request for comments. I think the article is significantly more readable as a result of your editorial suggestions, all of which I have adopted. I have also made a few additional changes. I have expanded my discussion about Sheldon and the large cents (now presumably S76c) and moved it into the appropriate chronological position.

I really appreciate your help.

Sincerely,

Tett

R. Tettenhorst

mb

Enclosure

THREE NEW SUBVARIETIES OF HALF CENTS? A SPECULATION

The Thin Planchet Lettered Edge specimens of 1794-1795. What are they?

I) Background

Two basic types of Liberty Cap half cents have been recognized ever since early U. S. coins were first studied. These are the heavier weight, thick planchet issues of 1793-1795, and the lighter weight, thin planchet issues of 1795-1797. The thick planchet issues have a lettered edge reading "TWO HUNDRED FOR A DOLLAR'' and had an official weight of 104 grains. During 1795, Congress passed legislation authorizing the shift to lighter weight copper coinage. The thin planchet issues, with a few exceptions, were made with plain edges, presumably because there was not enough room on the thinner edge for the letters to be placed neatly. The new official standard weight was 84 grains. Liberty Cap large cents are similarly divided into corresponding categories.

As numismatists began studying and collecting half cents, it was realized that there was an additional small category. Some of the 1797 thin planchet specimens of the third variety (Cohen 3, Breen 3, Gilbert 2) had a lettered edge. Gilbert gave this a different variety number, G1. However, current terminology is to refer to this as a subvariety, C3b and B3a, since the obverse and reverse dies are both the same as for the more common plain edge variety. In the sale of the H. Rogers collection in 1881 a different edge device, now known as the gripped edge, was first noted. (See Breen, p. 190) Still extremely rare, this has been given the subvariety designation, C3c and B3b. It is the possible expansion of this thin planchet lettered edge category to include three new subvarieties that is the subject of this article.

First, however, the history of other weight and edge combinations previously recognized should be completed. There are a number of thick planchet specimens known with plain edges. These can be divided into three types, as follows:

a) Gilbert described his variety 1795 G2 as having the same obverse and reverse dies as his G1, but with a plain edge instead of the lettered edge of G1. This is now known as having been an alteration. It was simply a G1 which had its edges ground down until the lettering disappeared. I found such a specimen in a dealer's junk box in 1985. I recall mischievously telling a fellow variety collector that I had "cherry-picked" my last missing Gilbert variety, probably R7, for $15!

b) The Parmelee Sale in 1890 contained an example of a 1795 half cent of the variety now known as C5b which was struck on a thick planchet cut from a spoiled large cent. A number of others have since been identified. Similarly, in 1953, Roger Cohen realized that certain specimens of his variety C6 were much above the standard weight because they also were struck on planchets cut from spoiled large cents. These he called his subvariety C6b. Breen utilizes the

same subvariety designation for these coins as his B5b and B6b.

c) A very few 1794 half cents are known without edge letters. These are simply considered to be errors. They are coins struck on planchets which somehow did not go through the edge lettering device.

II) Specimens under consideration now

In 1963, a 1795 G1 (which is also C1 and B1) appeared in the fixed price sale by Stacks of the outstanding Brobston collection of half cents. It was there described as a light-weight specimen weighing 77.3 grains. The comment was added, "Perhaps the only specimen in existence. We do not know of another 1795 thin planchet lettered edge half cent! Extremely rare." Roger Cohen bought it, and it appeared in Superior's 1993 auction of Roger's half cent collection as lot 42. The description was essentially the same as in the Brobston catalogue. A possible explanation was offered, "Perhaps it was cut down from some other copper stock, or perhaps the copper strip (from which planchets were cut) went through the rolling mills a few extra times, making it far too thin and thus making all planchets underweight." This was the only thin planchet lettered edge half cent of 1794 or 1795 known to either Roger or Walter at the time they wrote their respective books. Both of them considered it to be simply an error, meaning that it was unintentionally struck on a planchet that was accidentally light in weight. In discussing this coin, Breen offers this explanation, "This coin is probably the same one from Mehl's sale, November 28, 1939, lot 257, then to John Pawling, and later to Brobston....No duplicate has been reported. In all likelihood, it is not an intentional subvariety, and it shows no trace of overstriking on any other coin. Probably this planchet was cut from a single strip, which had been rolled too thin."

Since I have had a long-standing interest in half cent errors, I began looking about fifteen years ago to see if there were any other such specimens. Gradually others came to my attention. I am now aware of ten thin planchet lettered edge half cents of 1794 and 1795. As the pattern of these specimens emerged, it caused me to doubt whether these are simply errors, and to consider whether these could have been trial pieces intended to determine an appropriate weight for the newly authorized lighter weight half cents. In accordance with the thrifty practice then in use at the mint, they were placed into circulation after they had served their originally intended purpose.

The ten specimens now known to me are as follows:

1) 1794 C9 VG 80.7gr
2) 1794 C9 G 87.2gr
3) 1794 C9 VG 85.6gr
4) 1795 C1 AG 91.5gr
5) 1795 C1 G 92.7gr
6) 1795 C1 G 77.3gr (The Brobston-Cohen coin)
7) 1795 C1 G 95.7gr (McCawley-Grellman sale 1/11/97 #794)
8) 1795 C2 G 81.1gr
9) 1795 C2 Fr 81.6gr (EAC 1997 sale #53)

10) 1795 C2 VG 88.9gr

III) The alternatives

It seems to me that these specimens can be classified in three different ways:

a) They are simply errors struck on unintentionally thin light weight planchets. What is Tett getting so worked up about?
b) They are trial pieces intended to test various possible weights for the newly authorized lighter weight half cents. They were subsequently placed in circulation. As a separate question, they could be considered a subvariety as Breen does for the 1856 copper-nickel patterns, his B2b and B2c. Or they could be classified as "other half cents", as Cohen does.
c) They are something else, as yet unexplained.

IV) The case for the trial piece alternative

Quantity: Estimates have been made of the percentage of originally minted Liberty Cap half cents which have survived until the present time. My recollection is that most of these estimates have been in the range of 1% to 2%. Breen, for example, on page 139 arrives at an estimate of 1.86%,which he characterizes as "a generous estimate." There would have been no reason for anyone, even a numismatist, to have made any special effort to save one of these thin planchet lettered edge half cents. In fact, the low grade of the ten survivors indicates that they did not benefit from any preservation efforts, at least until this century. Therefore, taking the reciprocal of the survival percentage indicates that somewhere in the range of 500 to 1000 might originally have been struck As more such specimens are discovered now that a question as to their nature has arisen, application of the survival reciprocal will increase the estimated range of originally issued coins.

Motivation: There would be no gain for the makers of half cent planchets to sell the U. S. mint short weight planchets, since the planchets were purchased by the pound. Thinner planchets would have meant more work cutting planchets out of strip for the same amount of money. Similarly, I can find no record in the literature to indicate that the mint took it upon itself to make thinner planchets in order to save money on copper. Certainly Mint Director Elias Boudinot was keenly aware that the cost of making half cents and large cents at the old standard weight exceeded the face value of the coins. (See correspondence quoted in Breen, pp 123 – 126) But it is also clear that his reaction was to request legislation to reduce the authorized standard weight.

Custom: We know that copper trial pieces were made in the 1794-5 time period, and that the copper was placed into circulation. Three half cents of variety 1795 C6 are in existence today which were struck on planchets cut from copper trial pieces for dies of three different varieties of half dollars of 1794 and 1795. The half cents are well circulated. Certainly if three of these trial pieces survive today as undertypes there must have been many more

originally struck. If trial pieces for new dies were considered worth striking, then something as fundamental as a weight reduction to thinner planchets would seem to have required testing. Given the involvement of Congress and the President in authorizing such a change, it does not seem unreasonable that quantities of trial pieces would have been made and distributed. The evidence of the half dollar trial pieces would imply that the mint would have placed any remaining half cents into circulation. The other recipients might well have done the same.

Timing: This is the strongest evidence in support of the trial piece theory. Note that all ten of the known thin planchet lettered edge specimens are from the last three of the lettered edge varieties of 1794 –1795, namely 1794 C9, 1795 C1, and 1795 C2. The significance of this is that these are the three varieties struck after Congress passed and the President signed legislation authorizing a substantial reduction in the weight of the copper coinage, but before the actual new standard weight was decided. This is precisely the period in which trial pieces of various lighter weights would have been struck, in order to make a recommendation as to a precise new standard. No similar group of such light weight half cents is known for any 1794 varieties struck before the legislation authorizing them was enacted.
A more detailed chronology of the relevant events follows. (The regular type indicates previously known events. The **boldface** type represents my speculation as to what additional events took place with respect to these presumed trial pieces.)

July 8, 1794: The last regular coins dated 1794 are delivered by the mint. (Breen, p. 85 and Cohen, p. 17) The final variety is C9, also listed as B9. Subsequently war in Europe and the playing out of the Anglesey copper mines in Wales causes a significant increase in the price of copper. (Breen, p.125)

Late 1794 or early 1795: To support a recommendation to Congress that the weight of the copper coins be reduced, a number of half cent planchets are created at various weights substantially less than the 104 grain standard. The planchets have their edges lettered, following the usual practice. These are then struck, using the last pair of half cent dies in existence, namely those for 1794 C9. Enough are made to give at least one to each member of Congress.

March 3, 1795: Congress passes an act authorizing the President to reduce the weight of the copper coins. The authorized reduction in weight of the half cents is set at one pennyweight, or 24 grains. The authorized reduction in weight of cents is set at two pennyweights. (Section 8 of the Act)

Mid 1795: No further half cents are struck. (Breen, p. 123, and Cohen, p.24)

Oct – Dec 1795: The first half cents dated 1795 are struck. These are believed to be the thick planchet lettered edge varieties, C1 and C2a. (Breen, p. 123 and Cohen, p. 24)
Additional thin planchet lettered edge specimens are again struck to support Boudinot's continuing efforts to get the lighter weight copper coins approved by President Washington. The process is the same as with the 1794 dated coins. These

specimens are struck at various times, some using each of the two 1795 die combinations, C1 and C2.

Dec 3, 1795: In his report to the President, Boudinot specifically recommends that the weight of the cents be set at seven pennyweights (168 grains). The recommendation is supported with detailed financial calculations. (Breen, pp. 123-4) Implicitly, the corresponding weight for half cents would be set at 84 grains.

Dec 9, 1795: Having just purchased a supply of copper at a high price, Boudinot writes Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson again urging that the new standard for cents be set at 168 grains. Further calculations are included. (Breen, p. 124)

Dec 10, 1795: Jefferson immediately replies with a series of questions. (Breen, p. 125)

Dec 11, 1795: Boudinot sends a long reply to Jefferson, answering his questions and giving additional detailed calculations. (Breen, pp. 125-6)

Mid-Dec 1795: Upon closer inspection, Boudinot realizes that, although the obverse and reverse of the thinner half cents have received completely satisfactory impressions, the edges have not. The thinner edges do not have enough width for all the lettering to stay completely on the edge. Some letters run off or nearly off the edge, producing tiny nick-like marks on the rims. These are deemed unacceptable. After discussion of the problem it is realized that the necessity for edge devices on coins is primarily to prevent surreptitious filing of the edges to gain free bullion dust, and that this protection is not needed for copper coins. So the decision is made that the new lighter weight copper coins will have plain edges. Sheldon (p. 145-6) notes similar large cents made about this time, and offers a different hypothesis: "Apparently the change to the thin planchets preceded the abandonment of the edge lettering, as a few examples are found with a comparatively thin planchet and lettered edge." However this explanation seems to ignore the evidence of the half cents. If edge lettering was discontinued for the large cents in December of 1795 why would it have been retained for the first half cents struck on much thinner planchets in early 1796, and for a few of each of the first two varieties? How does this scenario explain the thin planchet 1794 C9's? <u>However, the trial piece hypothesis very neatly explains why the thin planchet lettered edge large cents are also found on the very pair of dies, S76, which were available at the time a specific new weight standard was being recommended. They were also trial pieces!</u>

Dec 27, 1795: President Washington orders that the recommended new weight be approved. (Breen, p. 126)

Dec 28, 1795: The first of the new standard copper coins are struck, with thinner planchets and plain edges. These are large cents, Sheldon 76b. (Breen, p. 126)

Jan-Jun, 1796: Thin planchet plain edge half cents dated 1795 are produced. These are varieties C2b, 3, 4, 5, and 6. The Breen varieties are numbered the same. (Breen, pp. 138-

9, and Cohen, p. 26) These conclusions were first published by Cohen, and later repeated by Breen.

V) Request for information and opinions

1. Does anyone know of other specimens of thin planchet lettered edge half cents of 1794 or 1795? These could be of the three varieties discussed above, or of other varieties of those years. If available, what are their weights and pedigrees?
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I would welcome all input on these or other related questions, either through the pages of Penny-Wise, by mail to PO Box 14020, St. Louis, Mo. 63178, or by e-mail addressed to halfcent@aol,com.

Thurs 2/12/98

Harry,

Received your further comments of 2/9. These also apparently crossed in the mail with my later draft. However, you make some suggestions which I had not previously seen, so here is another draft by fax. It also contains one small but important correction (The unique subvariety referred to in numbered ¶ 4 of the final page is C6b, not C4b.) and at least one other useful bit of information about the slope lettering itself at the end of the listing of specimens.

I hope this draft takes care of what is needed. If not, I suggest you fax me any further thoughts at (314) 721-6015.

Your continued assistance is much appreciated.

Tett

94.9.

I. Obv cracked but not cracked thru lower cap to hair
Rev no rim crumbling at fraction
II Obv faint crack. Cracks marks heavier (D left of cap, berries and leaves in wreath.
Rev few dentils crumbling L of fraction
III Obv crack 1. YES 2. YES now heavy 3 Maybe
Rev crumbling now and - above dents
IV Obv 1 NO 2 YES, I THINK SO (below top of (B?) 3. can't tell
crack thru top of LIBERTY. Rest marks in hair & fields
V Rev 1 YES buckled. HALF CENT 1. CENT ONLY 2. " " severely weakened or obliterated. 3 NO
RARE

1. No new dent crumbling
2. can't tell about " "
3. "

2/12/98

94.96.1	Perfect	match	edge Fellers to thickplaned
.2	"	"	
.3	"	"	
95.16.1	"	"	
.2	"	"	
.3	"	"	
.4	"	"	
95.2c.1	"	"	
2	"	"	
3	"	"	

HASTINGS FAMILY PRACTICE, P.C.
606 NORTH MINNESOTA AVENUE
HASTINGS, NEBRASKA 68901-5297

TELEPHONE 402-462-6701
FAX 402-462-6784

February 12, 1998, 16:30

Dear Tett,

I had a vasectomy fail to show up this afternoon, so I've just finished rereading your article!

I think that all of the changes & additions of emphasis are definite improvements. (I also happen to have been persuaded by your argument--but even if I hadn't been, I think the article is ready to print.)

Obviously, I know how many pages it will occupy, so I can allow for its space in the issue--but I would like to have a "plain paper" copy, by mail, from which to print. Since I don't anticipate that the issue will be ready to go to the printer anytime before the end of next week, any time within the next 6-7 days would be fine.

Looking forward to seeing you in Boston.

The French comes along apace. . .I even bid on the French 100 Francs (any one of four examples dated between 1900 and 1911) in the upcoming Coin Galleries Sale--about the same cost as Unc. double eagles, but with mintages of 20-30,000 each!

Kind regards,

Harry.

Harry,
Plain paper copy already in the mail to you. I would rather have you operate on my article than give me a vasectomy! :)

Tett

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Tett

2/17/98

BILL WEBER

Bill, this is the final copy I have submitted. Notice that I incorporated the two suggestions you made about 94C4b and about the style of the edge lettering, as well as some additional changes.

Tell

Thanks for your interest and help. Friendly debates about the definitions of "variety" and "subvariety" await us.

FROM THE DESK OF R. TETTENHORST

Penny Wise
5-15-98

dip or two in muriatic acid, a good amount of Dr. Black's coin darkener, a half-hour bake in the oven set at 550 degrees, and 2 hours in a rock tumbler filled with your loose pocket change! If you don't have access to a rock tumbler, try a small rough burlap bag filled with change and a few granite chips for two hours in the clothes dryer!!

All humor aside, getting the right "look" to the piece is open to all kinds of experimentation. A glance at the copies above shows that considerable "time" is easy to add, and getting the appropriate color appears successful and easily achieved. Probably, in the not too distant future we'll have the "right" formula for successfully counterfeiting early copper available on the INTERNET, along side of instructions for completing your own home-made nuclear device. Remember – the average copper collector does not consider "bead count" when trying to judge the authenticity of an early copper. I have purchased both copies of the GMM Nova Caesarea rarities which they offered – struck on pre-toned planchets, and were it not for the "COPY" struck on the reverse shield, I'd take them as mint state pieces – if I hadn't known the originals were unique.

The above is offered as food for thought, and your thoughts and comments are most welcome in the light of the altered GMM original that stumped the experts for a while recently.

* * * * * * * * * * * * *

AN OPEN LETTER TO R. TETTENHORST: VARIETIES & SUBVARIETIES

Bill Weber

We had just concluded our telephone conversation the other day when Elaine returned home with your note and thought provoking article. I hope you will remember me as one who appreciated "AAKC" - not a "DFK." The summers of my childhood - during the early and mid 1920's - were as a barefoot kid on a Salinas Valley farm well populated with free ranging chickens, cows, horses, etc., where a careless step reaped embarrassing rewards. A few EAC'ers will remember me as one who - when provided an outstanding early copper for viewing - described it as "An Ass Kickin' Coin."

Text Correction: Cohen does not **identify** his 1794 6b as a "subvariety" - nor does he use the term for 1795, 1797, or subsequent years; he uses "variety" throughout his text. I believe he **considered** the 1795 C-5b & C-6b to be subvarieties but expressed misgivings for having described the 1794's C-1b through C-6b, 1795 C-2b and 1797 C-3b/c with lower case letters, instead of providing the separate variety numbers they deserve and as Gilbert did for his 1795 No.'s 3 & 8 and 1797 G-1 & 2.

You provide compelling arguments explaining how the transition from thick to thin planchet half and large cents in 1795 may have occurred. If your theory is valid - does the following summary come reasonably close to explaining why two different years and three different die varieties were used in this "experiment"?? Since the edge letters on your lightweight `94's and `95's are consistent for their time of issue I must conclude:

a. Lightweight, lettered edge half cents began with copper stock being rolled thinner than normal to provide planchets of approximately 84 grains. Then - using 1794

C-9 edge, obv. & rev. dies - struck a very limited number of pieces before July 8, 1794.

b. More than a year had passed when the mint duplicated the operation described in a. above using 1795 C-1 - edge, obv. & rev. dies.
c. Sometime before December 1795, Mint Director Boudinot authorizes striking a third issue of lightweight, lettered edge half cents using 1795 C-2 dies.
d. That Mint Director Boudinot in 1794 and twice during 1795 submitted to President Washington, Secretary of State Jefferson, and the members of Congress, lightweight, lettered edge, half cent "trial pieces" for their inspection and approval. Boudinot's final proposal was approved creating a plain edge half cent weighing 84 grains.

VARIETY - An Improved Definition For - since Webster did not provide the definition I wanted. Remember I'm old enough to recall and will confirm that Socrates did say, "The definition of terms is the beginning of wisdom." Most of the confusion arising from the indiscriminate and incorrect use of "Subvariety" instead of "Variety" may be attributed to the vague numismatic definitions provided. Since the term begs redefining - here's my definition. Socrates/wrw f.

a. A **die variety** is created when the mint is authorized by its controlling agencies to use an obverse and reverse die - and when appropriate, edge dies to transfer their designs onto planchets of a certain size, alloy and weight. Half Cent edge dies described the denominations ratio to our unit or dollar. One edge die read - TWO HUNDRED, the other - FOR A DOLLAR.
b. U.S. copper coinage of 1793 and 1794 created legal coins of the realm using a combination of obverse, reverse, and two edge dies.
c. Authorized changes in a die's design or legend, or planchet weight or alloy, creates a new variety, as does changing an original die arrangement.

Webster's 3rd Unabridged of 1961 defines SUBVARIETY as: "A subdivision of a variety. Of less than varietal significance." A valuable descriptive tool when properly used - but it has fallen on hard times.

William Sheldon was the first prominent numismatic author, to my knowledge, to use Subvariety as a numismatic term. Sheldon and his disciples Breen, Hanson, et al, frequently described legitimate varieties as subvarieties so long as the obverse and reverse dies remained the same. They believed that any lawfully authorized changes of planchet weight and/or edge treatment were "Of less than varietal significance." Sheldon and Breen's misuse of subvariety has influenced many knowledgeable Early American and Colonial copper authors and catalogers to do the same.

Subvariety - its vague definition attracts inconsistent usage and becomes a non-definitive catchall. Breen provides these criteria for subvariety assignments.

"If it could be established that one group of planchets was cut with the half eagle planchet cutter, and another with the normal half cent cutter, that would make more subvarieties."

"Edge: Or whatever creates a subvariety from (1794), 1795 through 1802, planchet stock also."

Describing two of the seven 1795 varieties: "Subvarieties are coins differing in authorized weight or edge device, though struck from the same dies."

Breen's remarks regarding the 1797 C/B-3c/3b. "We cannot understand why Gilbert ignored the sub-variety." Perhaps it was because it did not come into numismatic misuse until 1948.

1804: A "subvariety" created by obverse die damage - B-4a/C-5 with spike chin.

1856: B-2a & b/c. Separate variety numbers should describe the copper and the copper-nickel issues.

"SUBVARIETY" correctly describes half cents as:

a. Having planchets with identifiable under type; e.g., TA&L tokens, spoiled U.S. large cents, etc.
b. Half cents on plain edge planchets of less than 70 grains, or those of more than 100 grains which may evidence host planchet under type.
c. Tett's subject coins do not qualify - see below. Examples a. & b. Above agree with Webster as they are "Of less than varietal significance," and NO die changes take place.

Half Cent Subvarieties: With appropriate lower case b or c assignments.

1795: C/B-5b and 6b - coins weighing **100** grains or more.
1795: B-6c - coins with identifiable TA&L token under type.
1796: B-2b - coins weighing **100** grains or more - or with identifiable under type.
1797: B-1b & c also B-2b & c - coins with identifiable under type.
1797: C/B-3a, b, & c, deserve their own variety and subvariety numbers - each is known on spoiled cent planchets.
1800: B-1b - **with** large cent under type.
1802-0: Very few C/B-1's and perhaps 15% of the C/B-2 evidence cent under type. Provide "sub" assignment for coins with under type.

TETT'S ARTICLE - PART V) Request for information and opinions:

See next to last sentence of item 4 - "Should these thin planchet lettered edge half cents be regarded as subvarieties?"

The very rare thin planchet, lettered edge half cents, described by Mr. R. Tettenhorst should be listed as "Tett's Pattern Half Cents" to honor their discoverer / researcher. The essential consideration here is intent. Boudinot authorized striking these lightweight trial pieces to become his "agents" for effecting a legal weight reduction of our 1795 copper coinage. In my opinion - these half cents are better described as "patterns." They were not designed or intended to be released into circulation. Nor were they - by weight - lawful legal tender.

I propose they be listed in future U.S. half cent references as "T" varieties. They - like their discoverer - are unique and unlike any previously described half cents. Suggested manner of listing: Year 1794 - Variety T-1a, b, c. Year 1795 - Variety T-1a, b, c, d. Year 1795 T-2a, b, c. Future examples found of the three known "T" varieties would

assume the next available lower case letter to those listed. If a new and previously unknown TTHC variety emerges - let's say of 1794 - it would become 1794 - Variety T-2a.

IN SUMMARY: To reaffirm some ideas / concepts provided above which may simplify and thereby facilitate using VARIETY or SUBVARIETY in numismatic descriptions:

a. Dies used for edge treatment were not optional features but legally mandated for our copper coins of 1793, `94 and `95. Large cent edges were reeded and lettered in 1795 and "gripped" in 1797.
b. Collectors, authors, and catalogers will recognize that all dies - edge, obverse and reverse - are of equal importance for assigning variety numbers.
c. When a subvariety is properly reassigned a variety number the only change a collector need make is a notation on the coin's envelope or holder.
d. If a few collectors and catalogers are distressed with my radical proposals, they'll eventually discover there is NO change in the number of coins needed to complete a collection of half cents. Just as a proposal to restore the 1804 C-3 / B-4 to variety status. Profound thinkers did not realize that in owning an 1804 C-5 / B4a - it was an `04 C-3 / B-4 late die state with "spike chin."

IF my proposed variety / subvariety standards are adopted - as orphans sometimes are - and it were possible to publish a Third Edition of Cohen or a Second Edition of Breen, it would describe:

"Liberty Cap" var. & subvar.: 1793 - 4 var. / 0 subvar. 1794 - 15 var./ 0 subvar. 1795 - 7 var./ 3 subvar. 1796 - 2 var. / 1 subvar. 1797 - 5 var. / 7 subvar. Total - 33 varieties 7 11 subvarieties. Patterns: 3 "T" varieties

"Draped Bust" var. & subvar.: 1800 - 1 var./ 1 subvar. 1802 - 2 var./ 2 subvar. 1803 through 1808 - 27 var./ 0 sub.

"Coronet Head" var. & subvar.: 1856 - 1 var. 2 subvar.

Your comments are welcomed.

Bill Weber
PO Box 204
Fulton, CA 95439
(707) 545 - 2055

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HALF CENT SUBVARIETIES: A VIEW POINT

Ray Rouse

The March 1997 *Penny-Wise* had a great half cent article by R. Tettenhorst in which he wanted to know "what are the criteria for subvariety status?"

Normally we define a coin variety as one that has a particular combination of obverse and reverse dies. Each distinctive die combination equals one variety. By this standard, there are 88 varieties of half cents that were put into circulation between 1793 and 1857. In addition, there are a large number of varieties that were never intended for

use as public coinage. Although these original proofs and proof restrikes are half cent varieties, many collectors treat them as NCs (non-collectables), preferring instead to use the 99 distinctive half cents listed by Roger Cohen, Jr. as the basis for their collections. The difference between the 88 basic varieties mentioned above and the 99 items listed by Cohen consist of 11 acknowledged "subvarieites." What then is a subvariety?

A subvariety is a coin that has the same obverse and reverse as a more common coin and yet has a distinctive characteristic that separates it from the more common coin. There are two kinds of half cent subvarieties: those with different edges; and those struck from different planchet stock. Obviously neither of these traits affects the obverse and reverse combination on the coin.

The 1794 half cents listed as Cohen subvarieties 1b, 2b, 3b, 4b, 5b, and 6b are all examples of uncommon edge lettering. That is 1794 half cents Cohen numbers 1a, 2a, 3a, 4a, 5a, and 6a all have the same obverses and reverses as their "b" subvariety counterparts, but they have edge lettering that is more common than that of the "b" subvarieties. Thus the "less normal" example is considered the subvariety.

When we look at 1795 half cents, we find examples of subvarieties that are struck on both thin and thick planchets. 1795 Cohen 2b is a thin planchet example of the more common 1795 Cohen 2a. Both 1795 Cohen 5b and 6b are thick planchet examples of the more common 1795 Cohen 5a and 6a half cents. Simply put, the subvarieties above are coins struck from a different planchet stock than their more common brethren.

How do we apply this information in our guest to find half cent subvarieties? Let's look at an example.

Records show that both rolled out large cent planchets and Boulton planchets were used to make half cents dated 1800. Cohen tells us that 12,356 rolled out large cent planchets and 190,552 Boulton planchets were used. Thus the more common Boulton planchets form the variety for the year, and the half cents dated 1800 from large cent planchet stock make up a subvariety for the year.

Using the above guidelines adds several subvarieties to the list. For example, 1797 Cohen variety 2 was made on three types of planchets: sheet copper; spoiled large cents; and Talbot Allum and Lee tokens. Since coins made from the tokens seem to be more common than the others, they would be the variety and the coins made from sheet copper and from spoiled large cent planchets would both be subvarieties.

Apparently Breen considered each different planchet stock as a subvariety, which is why he list more "subvarieties" than Cohen. In this I think he was correct.

Much of the confusion about subvarieties occurs because sometimes the planchet undertype is visible, whereas on other coins no trace of an undertype can be found. Even visible undertype is not easily identified. However, there are examples of half cents in which even the variety of the large cent undertype can be attributed. These make dramatic and desirable coins, but are they subvarieties or not?

It ain't necessarily so! If, as in the cases of 1795 Cohen 6A and 1797 Cohen 2, the tokens are the most common planchet stock, then no matter how dramatic the undertype, they constitute the variety and examples NOT ON Talbot Allum and Lee tokens would be subvarieties.

At the 1997 Half Cent Happening, I monitored the table that displayed 13 examples of 1797 Cohen 3b (lettered edge) half cents. Of these coins, only two had visible undertype; yet we are told that they were all struck from rolled out large cent planchets. Reading their description in the literature shows that their subvariety status is clearly based on their edge lettering and not on the underlying planchet stock. Thus it is apparent that the visibility of the undertype does not determine the existence of a subvariety.

Lack of undertype visibility makes subvarieties made from different planchet stock hard to find and identify. For example, using the numbers given above for 1800 half cents, we find that less than 7% of them were made from spoiled large cent planchets. Now if, as in our 1797 Cohen 3b example, only about 15% of these show an undertype; and given that only a small percentage of all 1800 half cents struck still survive today; then it is no surprise that the known population of this "subvariety" is small.

What have we learned? We can use edge markings and planchet stock to determine subvarieties. We can fit items such as the 1856 copper nickel trial piece neatly into our collections as simple subvarieties based on planchet stock.

A suggestion: Let's redo the nomenclature to make it clear to new collectors what characteristic it is that makes a coin a subvariety. To do this we simply list all subvarieties as either "E" for edge or "S" for stock. Thus 1794 half cent subvarieties would include Cohen 13, 2e, 3e, 4e, 5e, and 6e while 1795 half cent subvarieties would include Cohen 2s, 5s, and 6s.

The good news in subvarieties is that as our 1800 half cent example shows, they are out there. The bad news is that you have to be a good detective to separate "subvarieties" from the masses.

Happy hunting.

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WERE 1832-DATED HALF CENTS MINTED BEFORE THE 1831 ORIGINALS?

Ron Manley

According to a September 16th, 1997 article in *Numismatic News* by R. W. Julian, Mint director Dr. Samuel Moore's annual report to the President listed 2,200 half cents minted as of January 1832. This quantity has been assumed by Julian and earlier researchers to reflect the total mintage of 1831 Originals, excluding proofs. Julian has surmised that the bulk of the 1831 Originals coined never left the Mint, but were included "by mistake" in a mass melting order of old half cents needed for copper alloy in gold and silver coinage. In addition, Julian suggested that the 1831-dated coinage was "nothing more than a trial run, not meant for circulation as such."

I believe, as do other students of the half cent series, that the number of surviving specimens of 1831 Originals is much too low to have had an original mintage of 2,200 specimens. Another possibility has serendipitously evolved, based upon my research, that suggests that the 2,200 half cents mentioned in Moore's annual report to the President were actually 1832-dated half cents.

There are three distinct varieties of 1832 half cents, created by mating a single 1832-dated obverse die with three different reverse dies. No deterioration of the 1832 obverse die has previously been noted that would help establish an emission sequence. The first variety of the year has "logically" been assumed to be 1832 B-1, C-1 because that variety used the same reverse die as the 1831 Originals. Unfortunately, logical assumptions often seem to be wrong where early American copper is concerned.

It turns out that two reverse letter punches were introduced with the half cents of 1831-1832. The letters affected by the punch changes were N and E. By studying the order of introduction of these new letter punches, I have been able to determine the order of completion of the three reverse dies used for the 1831-1832 half cents.

The first reverse die of 1831-1832 completed was not, as one might expect, the 1831 Original/1832 B-1,C-1 reverse die—but the 1832 B-3, C-3 reverse die. This reverse die used the old letter punches for N and E. The old N punch was "wide", compared to the new "narrow" N punch. The old E punch had a tall crosslet at the end of its middle arm that touched, or nearly touched its top arm. The new E punch was "open" with its arms well-separated.

Another general change introduced for half cents in 1831-1832 was a modified border adding a plain, raised rim around a continuous beaded border. The 1832 B-3, C-3 reverse lacks the plain rim around its border, further indicating that it is the earliest reverse die of 1831-1832.

The second reverse die completed was the one used for the 1831 Originals and 1832 B-1, C-1. The old "wide" N punch was again used for the N in UNITED, but the N in CENT was repunched on the die using the new "narrow" N punch. Note that HALF CENT is part of the

reverse hub and therefore its letters are not individually punched into each working die. The new "open" E punch was used for all three E's in the reverse legend.

The last reverse die completed was the 1832 B-2, C-2 die. This reverse die (and the dies for the remaining Classic Head varieties) used only the new N and E punches in the legend.

In summary, the reverse dies of 1832 were completed in the order of first 1832 B-3, C-3, followed by 1832 B-1, C-1, and finally 1832 B-2, C-2. Order of die completion does not establish order of die introduction to coinage. However, it does suggest a possible, even probable, minting sequence. Indeed, after examining a number of uncirculated specimens of each 1832 variety (both in the copper and using enlarged photos), it appears that the obverse dentilation (beading) is almost always less defined on the 1832 B-2, C-2 variety—particularly, below the bust. *Compare, for example, the Breen obverse plate coin for 1832 B-2, C-2 with the plate for each of the other two varieties.*

I have observed faint clash marks on the reverse of late die state (LDS) 1832 B-2, C-2 specimens, both with the early and late reverse crack between TE in STATES. These clash marks are found just below the lower inner berry right of F. Seeing them will probably require at least an About Uncirculated specimen, magnification, and good lighting. There *appears* to be on the obverse of these same high-grade LDS specimens a fine hair-like clash mark between the right side of the curl above the 2 and the adjacent curl. It is best seen with at least 10x magnification. *This apparent obverse clash mark has not been seen on high grade specimens of 1832 B-1, C-1, 1832 B-3, C-3, or early die state 1832 B-2, C-2 (without the reverse crack).*

In addition, I have recently obtained a very late die state 1832 B-2, C-2 specimen for my collection in About Uncirculated condition which is the latest 1832 specimen of any variety that I have seen. The reverse crack is bold. There is obverse rim crumbling at 12:00 and also above stars 8 through 10. Although the rest of the coin is well struck, much of the obverse beading is indistinct due to die wear. *The above observations are the strongest evidence to date that 1832 B-2, C-2 was the last 1832-dated variety struck.*

What about the first 1832-dated variety? A choice of 1832 B-3, C-3 would create the illogical implication that the first 1832 variety was minted before the 1831 Originals! But, as I said at the beginning, the logical solution is not always the correct one where early copper is involved. With that said, I propose the following scenario. Factual comments in support of my scenario are given in italics.

It appears that two obverse dies, one dated 1831 and the other 1832, were completed about the same time, probably in late 1831. *Evidence for this conclusion is that the two obverse dies share the same profile for Liberty, which is unlike later obverse dies used for the 1833-1835 coinage, where the nose and chin features were further strengthened. Unlike the varieties that came immediately before and after, only the 1831 and 1832 dies have a small date. A tiny dot between the letters RT in LIBERTY is visible on the 1831-1832 dies, as a result of a slight*

deterioration of the obverse hub. This dot is not visible on the earlier 1829-dated obverse die but is visible on the later obverse dies of 1833-1835.

With the year 1832 being around the corner, a decision apparently was made to begin coinage using the 1832-dated die. At this time, the only available reverse die would have been the 1832 B-3, C-3 reverse. The 2,200 specimens the Mint director reported minted as of January 1832 would have been of this variety. *Generally, the Mint reported only the number of coins delivered and the delivery date, not the date on the coins themselves. Thus, an 1831 date for these half cents was inferred by earlier researchers based upon the existence of a couple dozen or so 1831 Originals.*

Based upon the appearance of surviving specimens, the 1832 B-3, C-3 reverse die must have rusted almost immediately. *Walter Breen, on page 354 of his Half Cent Encyclopedia, indicated that three proofs are known of this variety, all from the heavily rusted die state, but after the dies had been repolished.* The Mint, not wanting to cease production while the 1832 B-3, C-3 dies were being repolished, would have continued coinage with the only available half cent dies remaining available: the 1831 obverse die and the next reverse die completed—the 1831 Original/1832 B-1, C-1 reverse. *These dies initially had proof, or proof-like, surfaces.* Only a small number of 1831 Originals were minted while the 1832 B-3, C-3 dies were being repolished. *After the 1832 B-3, C-3 dies were repolished, a few additional 1832 B-3, C-3 specimens were minted (accounting for the three surviving "proofs" acknowledged). Breen described these "proofs" as still showing remnants of advanced die rust on the reverse and, presumably, the reverse die was retired for that reason.*

The new 1832 B-1, C-1 reverse (still with proof-like surfaces from its use with the 1831 Originals) was then put back into service. After only a handful or so 1832 B-1, C-1 specimens were coined, the dies lost their proof-like surfaces *(only three or four surviving proofs of this variety are reported).* The 1832 B-1, C-1 business strike mintage continued until a heavy crack developed on the reverse. The obverse die was apparently repolished again, restoring its proof-like surfaces, while the third and final reverse die was being completed, resulting in the proofs and business strikes of the 1832 B-2, C-2 variety.

I don't accept R. W. Julian's explanation in his 1997 *Numismatic News* article that 2,200 1831-dated half cents were minted, the majority of which never left the Mint but were included "by mistake" in a mass melting order of old half cents. In a 1972 article, Mr. Julian had indicated that it was half cents "dated 1825 through 1828" that "were melted in 1830 or 1831" (*Numismatic Scrapbook*, Vol. 38, No. 440, October, 1972, p. 887).

In a personal communication, Mr. Julian indicated to me that it was the introduction of the new borders that led him to the conclusion that the 2,200 half cents reported in 1831 were a test coinage. According to Walter Breen on page 337 of his Half Cent Encyclopedia, the new style of beaded borders was first introduced in 1828 on dimes, followed in 1829 on half dimes, quarter eagles, and the second type half eagles. The 1831-dated quarter dollars also had the new style border. I have found no evidence in the form of unusually low mintages or rare varieties that the

dimes, half dimes, or quarter dollars introduced with the new borders consisted of a test coinage. If the introduction of a new border style led to a trial mintage of 1831-dated half cents, why were there no trial mintages earlier for these other denominations?

Mint records show that no half cents were delivered in 1832. However, Mint records do describe a June 1833 delivery consisting of 154,000 half cents minted in 1832 and 1833. Walter Breen estimated the 1832-dated mintage included in this delivery to be about 90,000 half cents. Most of the rest of the June delivery consisted of 1833-dated specimens, although many additional 1833-dated specimens were included in a later delivery. Possibly, only a few hundred 1831 Originals were actually minted. I believe it quite likely that the majority of these ended up in this June 1833 delivery, explaining why most of the surviving specimens show some circulation.

Well, there you have it. My scenario provides a new emission sequence for the 1832 proof and business strike half cent varieties, based upon the completion order of the reverse dies and new physical evidence that 1832 B-2, C-2 was struck from the latest state of the obverse die. The proposed emission sequence further provides a plausible explanation for the small number of surviving 1831 Originals and why most are found in circulated condition. I'm interested in your comments, pro and con. Let's hear 'em.

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NEW JERSEY COPPERS, PART 37: MARIS 9G

Ray Williams

I'd like to thank those who called and offered support and encouragement after my first attempt at writing a Condition Census. Stepping into John Griffee's shoes is not an easy task. John is now heavily involved in researching the St. Patrick's coinage imported by Mark Newbie, and upon completion of his work, we'll have a reference book to add to our libraries. Good luck John!

The Maris 9G is a member of the "Coulterless" family of NJ Coppers. Dr. Maris describes this coin as, "Very large head; shaggy mane; no coulter; plow very low; single-tree parallel with the beam; point after the legend. Shield shaped like that of C, excepting that the chief points are less sharp; the lines also, are much finer. Appears to be unique. Owned by the writer, who obtained it in the city of Wilmington, Delaware." Walter Breen in 1955 had to say, "Barely collectible. I have not been able to trace more than four and all are worn. The sharpest is the Taylor coin. Almost it's equal is the Maris Plate coin, but the reverse has some cuts. This one, now in JHU, ex Garrett, ex Maris 359, was the discovery coin; it was found in 1875 and is mentioned in the appendix to Crosby. Spiro 1436, about grade 8 though called "Fine", brought $67.50. A fourth G4, came to Hillyer Ryder from Henry Chapman. This is the G. N. Lewis piece, which was called "Fair"."

1786 New Jersey Maris 9-G

Bowers and Merena, Taylor Sale, March 1987, lot 2158

R. TETTENHORST
P. O. Box 14020
Saint Louis, Missouri 63178

April 1, 1998

Remy Bourne
508 40th Avenue NE
Minneapolis, MN 55421-3833

Dear Remy:

Thank you very much for the clipping from the New York Journal & Patriotic Register, which arrived on my desk via Harry Salyards. This is, indeed, information relevant to my article, and I appreciate your taking the time and interest to send it to me.

Sincerely,

R. Tettenhorst

mb

c: Harry Salyards

[illegible] NE
[illegible], MN 55421-3833
U.S.A.
[illegible] 612 789 7070
FAX 612 789 4747

3/28/98

Remy Bourne
NUMISMATIC LITERATURE SPECIALIST

BE took original home

Dear Tett —
This is self-explanatory.
— Harry.

3/25/98
7:55:24 AM

Mr. Harry E. Salyards
606 North Minnesota
Hastings, NE
68901

Dear Mr. Salyards:

While reading the two articles on the weights of the half cents by T. Tettenhorst & Ron Manley in the latest issue of Penny-Wise caused me to check a newspaper in my numismatic literature collection on the that subject.

In the *New York Journal & Patriotic Register*, Friday, January 29, 1796., is the following:

"By George Washington, President of the United States. A Proclamation. Whereas by an act, supplementary to the act, entitled, "An act establishing a mint, and regulating the coins of the United States'" passed on the third day of March, One Thousand Seven Hundred and Ninety Five, "The President of the United States is authorized, whenever he shall think it for the benefit of the United States, to reduce the weight of the copper coin of the United States, provided such reduction shall not in the whole exceed two penny weight in each cent, and in like proportion in a half cent, of which he shall give notice by proclamation:"

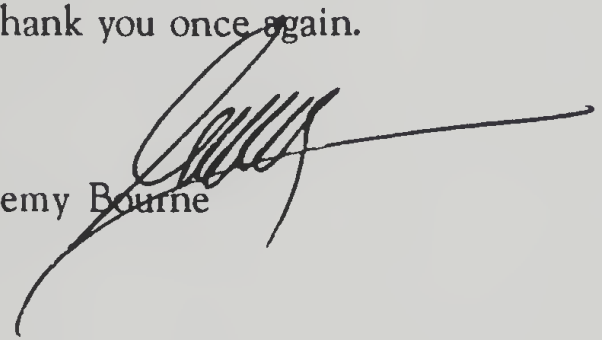
And whereas on account of the increased price of copper and expense of coinage, I have thought it would be for the benefit of the United States to reduce the weight of the copper coin of the United States, one penny weight and fifteen grains in each cent, and in like proportion in each half cent, and the same has since the 27th day of December last, been reduced accordingly: I hereby give notice hereof; and that all cents and half cents coined, and to be coined at the mint of the United States from and after the said 27th day of December, are to weigh the cents, each seven penny weights, and the half cents, each three penny weights and twelve grains.

In testimony whereof, I, the said George Washington, President of the United States, have caused the seal of the United States to be hereto affixed, and signed the same with my hand. Done at (L.S.) the city of Philadelphia, on the 26th day of January, in the year of our Lord, one thousand seven hundred and ninety-six, and of the Independence of the United States the twentieth,

Go: Washington,
by the President,
Timothy Pickering'
Secretary of State."

Mr. Salyards, not being a copper collector I do not know if this is pertinent to the articles, if it is would you pass these copies on to the gentleman named above for their use (enclosed is two dollars for the additional postage). If not please excuse my ignorance and "file 13" this material and use the two dollars for doughnuts.

Thank you once again.



Remy Bourne

GREENLEAF'S

New York Journal & Patriotic Register

NUMBER 2 OF VOL. [illegible] FRIDAY, [illegible] 1776.

[illegible]

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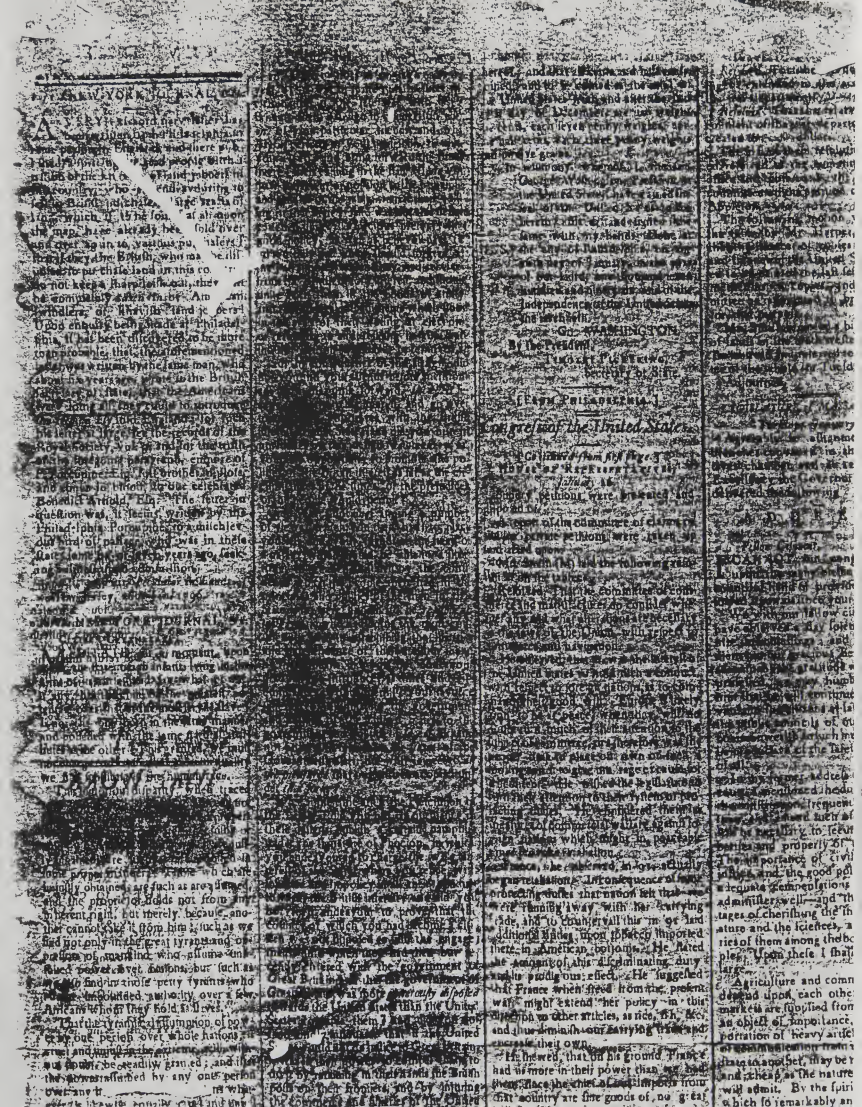

These are augmented by hundreds of electrotypes, cast copies, and alterations from other dates. Assuming you have an 1804 cent in your hand, and you have convinced yourself that it is a struck coin and not a cast piece or an electrotype, look for the following features. The fraction is large as on some 1803's and most 1807's. A long graver-scratch extends the inner leaf tip left of C(ENT). The crossbar of the 4 has a vertical crosslet at its right end. The dies are aligned so the '0' in the date is opposite the 'O' in OF. There are no die cracks on either side, but there may be a sizeable rim break involving the tops of RTY. If that rim break is present, there may be another even larger one involving the tops of MERIC.

Over 130 years ago, a fantasy of this year was made outside the mint from discarded used dies that had been sold by the mint as scrap steel. The reverse die of an 1820 cent (closed circular wreath, large berries) was mated with an altered, badly broken, and horribly rusted obverse die of an 1803 cent (S.261) to make an "1804 Restrike" cent. These fooled nobody at the time, but are today collectibles that bring several hundred dollars in their own right. It does indeed sound strange that an admitted, obvious fake of an 1804 cent brings more than a decent original example of most nearby years.

John D. Wright is the author of The CENT Book, which covers U.S. cents of 1816 – 1839. He has collected U.S. large cents for over forty years.

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

RON MANLEY WRITES,

Needless to say, I enjoyed the 1999 EAC Convention immensely. I also enjoyed the May 15th P-W Convention issue – particularly the articles by Craig Sholley and Mike Packard.

Unfortunately, I find I'm not nearly as excited about the new 1795 C-4b "subvariety" discovery as reported by R. Tettenhorst. Although its weight of 114 grains places it squarely in the range of weights typical of 1795 C-5b and C-6b specimens, there appears to be too much evidence (for my liking) that the 1795 half cents were all minted with little regard for planchet weight. For example, the known weight variation for 1795 C-1 specimens (lettered edge) is from 77 to 119 grains, and (now) for 1795 C-4 (plain edge) from 53 to 114 grains!

I hope some more of these "1795 C-4b's" turn up. Until then, I can't help thinking that even a broken clock tells the correct time twice a day.

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THOUGHTS ON THIN PLANCHET LETTERED EDGE HALF CENTS

Ron Manley

In his March P-W article "Three New Subvarieties of Half Cents? A Speculation", R. Tettenhorst listed ten specimens of thin planchet lettered edge (TPLE) half cents. These have the same die combinations as the varieties 1794 C-9 (3), 1795 C-1 (4), and 1795 C-2a (3). Tett questioned whether these coins should be considered errors, trial pieces, or something else. I found Tett's article very well-written, intriguing, and most enjoyable. However, I am not yet convinced that these pieces are trial pieces or patterns.

One of the ten specimens was known to Cohen and Breen when their respective books were published—the light-weight 1795 C-1 Brobston-Cohen coin. Both authors considered it simply an error—a detail pointed out by Tett in his recent article. In 1989, Bill Weber described two TPLE "1795 C-2a" specimens in his May P-W article "Sinking the Subs (Subvarieties)". These may possibly be two of the three specimens known to Tett. In this 1989 article, Bill had proposed that the TPLE "1795 C-2a" specimens known to him satisfied "all variety criteria" for a new variety.

Tett wrote that he had developed suspicions over a 15 year period that these TPLE half cents were not simply errors but, possibly, "trial pieces intended to determine an appropriate weight for the newly authorized lighter weight half cents". Whereas it is true that the TPLE half cents listed by Tett are only from the three varieties minted immediately before 1795 C-2b (the first plain edge variety minted at the standard weight of 84 grains), it should be noted that 1794 C-9, 1795 C-1, and 1795 C-2a are all fairly *common* varieties.

This observation is important if TPLE half cents are simple errors. Consider the possibility that a few thin planchets were randomly mixed in with the regular planchets used to mint 1795 C-1, 1795 C-2a, and the last 1794 varieties. Then, the proportion of TPLE specimens to total specimens minted should be approximately constant for each variety. For example, if there were five 1794 C-9 specimens for every 1794 C-8 specimen struck, there should have been about five TPLE 1794 C-9 specimens for every TPLE 1794 C-8 specimen. *Could this be why TPLE specimens of rare 1794 varieties have not yet been found*?

Three of the ten TPLE half cents listed by Tett weighed from 90 to 95.7 grains. If you think these are trial pieces or pattern coins, consider the following half cents from the 1992 Cohen sale: lot 9 (1794 C-1b, wt. 89.97 grains), lot 10 (1794 C-2a, wt. 94.91 grains), lot 19 (1794 C-3b, wt. 95.37 grains), lot 20 (1794 C-4a, wt. 94.14 grains), lot 29 (1794 C-6a, wt. 93.21 grains), lot 34 (1794 C-8, wt. 93.98 grains). Examples are not limited to this sale. Consider lot 1 (1793 C-1, wt. 95.1 grains), lot 2 (1793 C-2, wt. 95.4 grains), lot 8 (1794 C-6a, wt. 95.5 grains), lot 9 (1794 C-3a, wt. 91.5 grains), and lot 12 (1794 C-8, wt. 92.7 grains) from the 1994 Wally Gilligan sale. What about lot 3 (1793 C-3, wt. 95.1 grains) from the 1987 Norweb sale or lot 398 (1794 C-5a, wt. 95.8 grains) from the 1996 Eliasberg sale?

Lettered edge half cents dated 1794 and 1795 are found not only light weight, but much heavier than the official weight of 104 grains. Take for example lot 13 (1794 C-2b, wt. 112.19 grains) and lot 41 (1795 C-1, wt. 118.83) from the Cohen sale, lot 14 (1795 C-1, wt. 111.7 grains) from the Gilligan sale, lot 14 (1795 C-1, wt. 109.4 grains) from the Norweb sale, or lot 401 (1795 C-1, wt. 116.1 grains) from the Eliasberg sale. I feel certain that many additional heavy weight specimens will turn up, if collectors would only look.

Note that I have listed four *extra-thick planchet* examples of 1795 C-1, one of the three varieties Tett described with thin planchet specimens. What is this telling us? Tett's explanation does not explain why the weights of 1795 C-1 half cents vary all over the place. Perhaps, there is another explanation than the one Tett proposed. In his half cent book's section on 1795 lettered edge half cents, Breen described severe problems around this time with the rolling mills responsible for turning copper ingots into copper strip the "thickness of finished coins". He wrote that these rolling mills "broke down repeatedly, causing more interruptions of coinage even than die breakage". *Could this be the explanation for both thin planchet and extra-thick planchet 1795 lettered edge half cents?*

I have given in the above paragraphs my reasons why I consider it premature to elevate the status of Tett's TPLE half cents beyond the level of errors. We simply need more data on early half cent weights. However, I have included mention of Tett's discovery in my book's manuscript because these half cents are noteworthy in and of themselves, and because of the real *possibility* that they may be trial pieces, as Tett has speculated.

* * * * * * * * * * * * *

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* * * * * * * * * * * * *

6-22-98

Your Jan. article in P-W was interesting, but I don't think they were trial pieces. Most collectors don't weigh their coins, so it would be hard to prove that underweight half cents are really no big deal. ~~They~~ ~~Th~~ ~~ght~~ One could weigh many of the well-circulated coins to see if they fell into some sort of distribution and if there were hundreds in the "normal range" of say 97-103 grains and only a handful of light ones

you might have a cone.

Prime numbers again. Sure I'd like to see your proof for an infinite number of consecutive non-prime.

How rare are prime among the huge numbers I think they have determined all the prime up to a really huge number I know how to ~~calc~~ determine which are non-prime fairly easily which is easier than determining which are prime. I can imagine "the pros" use something like my idea to find all the prime.

If Mark McGuire stays healthy, he should hit a lot of homers this year

I found an 1808 C3 error at the '94 ANA in Detroit that I think would up going to you. It was double struck. the 1st strike was off center and the 2nd strike ~~was~~ maintained sidedness. The throat of the 1st strike could be seen clearly near the tip of the bust of the second. the reverse has a crescent of blank space where the 1st strike occurred. I was reminded of this coin when Chris McCawley described his coin he sold at EAC which was also an 1808 C3.

God bless

Frank

Wilkinson

FINAL

THREE NEW SUBVARIETIES OF HALF CENTS? A SPECULATION

R. Tettenhorst

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I) Background

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As numismatists began studying and collecting half cents, it was realized that there was an additional small category. Some of the 1797 thin planchet specimens of the third variety (Cohen 3, Breen 3, Gilbert 2) had a lettered edge. Gilbert gave this a different variety number, G1. However, current terminology is to refer to this as a subvariety, C3b and B3a, since the obverse and reverse dies are both the same as for the more common plain edge variety. It is the possible expansion of this thin planchet lettered edge category to include three new subvarieties that is the subject of this article. (In the sale of the H. Rogers collection in 1881 a different edge device, now known as the gripped edge, was first noted. See Breen, p. 190. Still extremely rare, this has been given the subvariety designation, C3c and B3b.) .

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In 1963, a 1795 G1 (which is also C1 and B1) appeared in the fixed price sale by Stacks of the outstanding Brobston collection of half cents. It was there described as a light-weight specimen weighing 77.3 grains. The comment was added, "Perhaps the only specimen in existence. We do not know of another 1795 thin planchet lettered edge half cent! Extremely rare." Roger Cohen bought it, and it appeared in Superior's 1993 auction of Roger's half cent collection as lot 42. The description was essentially the same as in the Brobston catalogue. A possible explanation was offered, "Perhaps it was cut down from some other copper stock, or perhaps the copper strip (from which planchets were cut) went through the rolling mills a few extra times, making it far too thin and thus making all planchets underweight." This was the only thin planchet lettered edge half cent of 1794 or 1795 known to either Roger or Walter at the time they wrote their respective books. Both of them considered it to be simply an error, meaning that it was unintentionally struck on a planchet that was accidentally light in weight. In discussing this coin, Breen offers this explanation, "This coin is probably the same one from Mehl's sale, November 28, 1939, lot 257, then to John Pawling, and later to Brobston....No duplicate has been reported. In all likelihood, it is not an intentional subvariety, and it shows no trace of overstriking on any other coin. Probably this planchet was cut from a single strip, which had been rolled too thin."

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The ten specimens now known to me are as follows:

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The edge lettering itself is in each case the same as on the thick planchet specimens of the same variety.

III) The alternatives

It seems to me that these specimens can be classified in three different ways:

a) They are simply errors struck on unintentionally thin light weight planchets. What is Tett getting so worked up about?
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Quantity: Estimates have been made of the percentage of originally minted Liberty Cap half cents which have survived until the present time. My recollection is that most of these estimates have been in the range of 1% to 2%. Breen, for example, on page 139 arrives at an estimate of 1.86%,which he characterizes as "a generous estimate." There would have been no reason for anyone, even a numismatist, to have made any special effort to save one of these thin planchet lettered edge half cents. In fact, the low grade of the ten survivors indicates that they did not benefit from any preservation efforts, at least until this century. Therefore, taking the reciprocal of the survival percentage indicates that somewhere in the range of 500 to 1000 might originally have been struck As more such specimens are discovered now that a question as to their nature has arisen, application of the survival reciprocal will increase the estimated range of originally issued coins.

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today which were struck on planchets cut from copper trial pieces for dies of three different varieties of half dollars of 1794 and 1795. The half cents are well circulated. Certainly if three of these trial pieces survive today as undertypes there must have been many more originally struck. If trial pieces for new dies were considered worth striking, then something as fundamental as a weight reduction to thinner planchets would seem to have required testing. Given the involvement of Congress and the President in authorizing such a change, it does not seem unreasonable that quantities of trial pieces would have been made and distributed. The evidence of the half dollar trial pieces would imply that the mint would have placed any remaining half cents into circulation. The other recipients might well have done the same.

Timing: This is the strongest evidence in support of the trial piece theory. Note that all ten of the known thin planchet lettered edge specimens are from the last three of the lettered edge varieties of 1794 –1795, namely 1794 C9, 1795 C1, and 1795 C2. The significance of this is that these are the three varieties struck after Congress passed and the President signed legislation authorizing a substantial reduction in the weight of the copper coinage, but before the actual new standard weight was decided. This is precisely the period in which trial pieces of various lighter weights would have been struck, in order to make a recommendation as to a precise new standard. No similar group of such light weight half cents is known for any 1794 varieties struck before the legislation authorizing them was enacted.

A more detailed chronology of the relevant events follows. (The regular type indicates previously known events. The **boldface** type represents my speculation as to what additional events took place with respect to these presumed trial pieces.)

July 8, 1794: The last regular coins dated 1794 are delivered by the mint. (Breen, p. 85 and Cohen, p. 17) The final variety is C9, also listed as B9. Subsequently war in Europe and the playing out of the Anglesey copper mines in Wales causes a significant increase in the price of copper. (Breen, p.125)

Late 1794 or early 1795: To support a recommendation to Congress that the weight of the copper coins be reduced, a number of half cent planchets are created at various weights substantially less than the 104 grain standard. The planchets have their edges lettered, following the usual practice. These are then struck, using the last pair of half cent dies then in existence, namely those for 1794 C9. Enough are made to give at least one to each member of Congress.

March 3, 1795: Congress passes an act authorizing the President to reduce the weight of the copper coins. The authorized reduction in weight of the half cents is set at one pennyweight, or 24 grains. The authorized reduction in weight of cents is set at two pennyweights. (Section 8 of the Act)

Mid 1795: No further half cents are struck. (Breen, p. 123, and Cohen, p.24)

Oct – Dec 1795: The first half cents dated 1795 are struck. These are believed to be the thick planchet lettered edge varieties, C1 and C2a. (Breen, p. 123 and Cohen, p. 24)

Additional thin planchet lettered edge specimens are again struck to support Boudinot's continuing efforts to get the lighter weight copper coins approved by President Washington. The process is the same as with the 1794 dated coins. These specimens are struck at various times, some using each of the two 1795 die combinations, C1 and C2.

Dec 3, 1795: In his report to the President, Boudinot specifically recommends that the weight of the cents be set at seven pennyweights (168 grains). The recommendation is supported with detailed financial calculations. (Breen, pp. 123-4) Implicitly, the corresponding weight for half cents would be set at 84 grains.

Dec 9, 1795: Having just purchased a supply of copper at a high price, Boudinot writes Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson again urging that the new standard for cents be set at 168 grains. Further calculations are included. (Breen, p. 124)

Dec 10, 1795: Jefferson immediately replies with a series of questions. (Breen, p. 125)

Dec 11, 1795: Boudinot sends a long reply to Jefferson, answering his questions and giving additional detailed calculations. (Breen, pp. 125-6)

Mid-Dec 1795: Upon closer inspection, Boudinot realizes that, although the obverse and reverse of the thinner half cents have received completely satisfactory impressions, the edges have not. The thinner edges do not have enough width for all the lettering to stay completely on the edge. Some letters run off or nearly off the edge, producing tiny nick-like marks on the rims. These are deemed unacceptable. After discussion of the problem it is realized that the necessity for edge devices on coins is primarily to prevent surreptitious filing of the edges to gain free bullion dust, and that this protection is not needed for copper coins. So the decision is made that the new lighter weight copper coins will have plain edges. Sheldon (p. 145-6) notes similar large cents made about this time, and offers a different hypothesis: "Apparently the change to the thin planchets preceded the abandonment of the edge lettering, as a few examples are found with a comparatively thin planchet and lettered edge." However this explanation seems to ignore the evidence of the half cents. If edge lettering was discontinued for the large cents in December of 1795 why would it have been retained for the first half cents struck on much thinner planchets in early 1796, and for a few of each of the first two varieties? How does this scenario explain the thin planchet 1794 C9's? However, the trial piece hypothesis very neatly explains why the thin planchet lettered edge large cents are also found on the very pair of dies, S76, which were available at the time a specific new weight standard was being recommended. They were also trial pieces!

Dec 27, 1795: President Washington orders that the recommended new weight be approved. (Breen, p. 126)

Dec 28, 1795: The first of the new standard copper coins are struck, with thinner planchets and plain edges. These are large cents, Sheldon 76b. (Breen, p. 126)

Jan-Jun, 1796: Thin planchet plain edge half cents dated 1795 are produced. These are varieties C2b, 3, 4, 5, and 6. The Breen varieties are numbered the same. (Breen, pp. 138-9, and Cohen, p. 26) These conclusions were first published by Cohen, and later repeated by Breen.

V) Request for information and opinions

1. Does anyone know of other specimens of thin planchet lettered edge half cents of 1794 or 1795? These could be of the three varieties discussed above, or of other varieties of those years. If available, what are their weights and pedigrees?
2. Does anyone know of any correspondence to or from the mint which says or implies that a number of trial pieces of half cents at lighter weights were made in summer or fall of 1795?
3. What are the coins listed above?, Are they simply error coins, or trial pieces, or something else? What does the evidence suggest to you?
4. As a matter of semantics, should these be referred to as subvarieties or not? Socrates is reported to have said, "The definition of terms is the beginning of wisdom." Yet we do not seem to have a consistent and universally accepted definition of the term "subvariety." Population is not a criterion. 1794 C6b, B4a is unique, yet both authors and other collectors identify it as a subvariety. Undertype is not consistently applied. Both authors and all collectors consider the 1795 #5 and #6 struck on planchets cut from error large cents to be subvarieties, but the same planchet source for half cents dated 1797 and 1800 is not yet accorded subvariety status. Neither does weight explain the different treatment of these years. Cohen does not consider planchets cut from Talbot Allum & Lee to be grounds for considering coins struck on them to be of a subvariety, but Breen does. The prevailing practice seems to follow Cohen. And while both authors accord subvariety status to 1795 half cents struck over error large cents, neither does so to those struck over error half cents Breen lists the 1856 copper-nickel pattern as a subvariety. Cohen does not, relegating it to his category of "other half cents." And their different treatment of proof-only issues is well known. The intentional creation of differences, as opposed to errors, does not explain the differing subvariety treatment of undertypes of varying kinds and dates. Different edge lettering, or its presence or absence, always creates a subvariety, but some of the other accepted subvarieties listed above do not earn their status in that way. So, what are the criteria for subvariety status? Should consistency or custom rule? Should these thin planchet lettered edge half cents be regarded as subvarieties 1794 C9b, 1795 C1b, and 1795 C2c? How say you now, EAC members?

I would welcome all input on these or other related questions, either through the pages of Penny-Wise, by mail to PO Box 14020, St. Louis, Mo. 63178, or by e-mail addressed to halfcent@aol,com.

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Custom: We know that copper trial pieces were made in the 1794-5 time period, and that the copper was placed into circulation. Three half cents of variety 1795 C6 are in existence

today which were struck on planchets cut from copper trial pieces for dies of three different varieties of half dollars of 1794 and 1795. The half cents are well circulated. Certainly if three of these trial pieces survive today as undertypes there must have been many more originally struck. If trial pieces for new dies were considered worth striking, then something as fundamental as a weight reduction to thinner planchets would seem to have required testing. Given the involvement of Congress and the President in authorizing such a change, it does not seem unreasonable that quantities of trial pieces would have been made and distributed. The evidence of the half dollar trial pieces would imply that the mint would have placed any remaining half cents into circulation. The other recipients might well have done the same.

Timing: This is the strongest evidence in support of the trial piece theory. Note that all ten of the known thin planchet lettered edge specimens are from the last three of the lettered edge varieties of 1794 –1795, namely 1794 C9, 1795 C1, and 1795 C2. The significance of this is that these are the three varieties struck after Congress passed and the President signed legislation authorizing a substantial reduction in the weight of the copper coinage, but before the actual new standard weight was decided. This is precisely the period in which trial pieces of various lighter weights would have been struck, in order to make a recommendation as to a precise new standard. No similar group of such light weight half cents is known for any 1794 varieties struck before the legislation authorizing them was enacted.
A more detailed chronology of the relevant events follows. (The regular type indicates previously known events. The **boldface** type represents my speculation as to what additional events took place with respect to these presumed trial pieces.)

July 8, 1794: The last regular coins dated 1794 are delivered by the mint. (Breen, p. 85 and Cohen, p. 17) The final variety is C9, also listed as B9. Subsequently war in Europe and the playing out of the Anglesey copper mines in Wales causes a significant increase in the price of copper. (Breen, p.125)

Late 1794 or early 1795: To support a recommendation to Congress that the weight of the copper coins be reduced, a number of half cent planchets are created at various weights substantially less than the 104 grain standard. The planchets have their edges lettered, following the usual practice. These are then struck, using the last pair of half cent dies then in existence, namely those for 1794 C9. Enough are made to give at least one to each member of Congress.

March 3, 1795: Congress passes an act authorizing the President to reduce the weight of the copper coins. The authorized reduction in weight of the half cents is set at one pennyweight, or 24 grains. The authorized reduction in weight of cents is set at two pennyweights. (Section 8 of the Act)

Mid 1795: No further half cents are struck. (Breen, p. 123, and Cohen, p.24)

Oct – Dec 1795: The first half cents dated 1795 are struck. These are believed to be the thick planchet lettered edge varieties, C1 and C2a. (Breen, p. 123 and Cohen, p. 24)

Additional thin planchet lettered edge specimens are again struck to support Boudinot's continuing efforts to get the lighter weight copper coins approved by President Washington. The process is the same as with the 1794 dated coins. These specimens are struck at various times, some using each of the two 1795 die combinations, C1 and C2.

Dec 3, 1795: In his report to the President, Boudinot specifically recommends that the weight of the cents be set at seven pennyweights (168 grains). The recommendation is supported with detailed financial calculations. (Breen, pp. 123-4) Implicitly, the corresponding weight for half cents would be set at 84 grains.

Dec 9, 1795: Having just purchased a supply of copper at a high price, Boudinot writes Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson again urging that the new standard for cents be set at 168 grains. Further calculations are included. (Breen, p. 124)

Dec 10, 1795: Jefferson immediately replies with a series of questions. (Breen, p. 125)

Dec 11, 1795: Boudinot sends a long reply to Jefferson, answering his questions and giving additional detailed calculations. (Breen, pp. 125-6)

Mid-Dec 1795: Upon closer inspection, Boudinot realizes that, although the obverse and reverse of the thinner half cents have received completely satisfactory impressions, the edges have not. The thinner edges do not have enough width for all the lettering to stay completely on the edge. Some letters run off or nearly off the edge, producing tiny nick-like marks on the rims. These are deemed unacceptable. After discussion of the problem it is realized that the necessity for edge devices on coins is primarily to prevent surreptitious filing of the edges to gain free bullion dust, and that this protection is not needed for copper coins. So the decision is made that the new lighter weight copper coins will have plain edges. Sheldon (p. 145-6) notes similar large cents made about this time, and offers a different hypothesis: "Apparently the change to the thin planchets preceded the abandonment of the edge lettering, as a few examples are found with a comparatively thin planchet and lettered edge." However this explanation seems to ignore the evidence of the half cents. If edge lettering was discontinued for the large cents in December of 1795 why would it have been retained for the first half cents struck on much thinner planchets in early 1796, and for a few of each of the first two varieties? How does this scenario explain the thin planchet 1794 C9's? <u>However, the trial piece hypothesis very neatly explains why the thin planchet lettered edge large cents are also found on the very pair of dies, S76, which were available at the time a specific new weight standard was being recommended. They were also trial pieces!</u>

Dec 27, 1795: President Washington orders that the recommended new weight be approved. (Breen, p. 126)

Dec 28, 1795: The first of the new standard copper coins are struck, with thinner planchets and plain edges. These are large cents, Sheldon 76b. (Breen, p. 126)

Jan-Jun, 1796: Thin planchet plain edge half cents dated 1795 are produced. These are varieties C2b, 3, 4, 5, and 6. The Breen varieties are numbered the same. (Breen, pp. 138-9, and Cohen, p. 26) These conclusions were first published by Cohen, and later repeated by Breen.

V) Request for information and opinions

1. Does anyone know of other specimens of thin planchet lettered edge half cents of 1794 or 1795? These could be of the three varieties discussed above, or of other varieties of those years. If available, what are their weights and pedigrees?
2. Does anyone know of any correspondence to or from the mint which says or implies that a number of trial pieces of half cents at lighter weights were made in summer or fall of 1795?
3. What are the coins listed above? Are they simply error coins, or trial pieces, or something else? What does the evidence suggest to you?
4. As a matter of semantics, should these be referred to as subvarieties or not? Socrates is reported to have said, "The definition of terms is the beginning of wisdom." Yet we do not seem to have a consistent and universally accepted definition of the term "subvariety." Population is not a criterion. 1794 C6b, B4a is unique, yet both authors and other collectors identify it as a subvariety. Undertype is not consistently applied. Both authors and all collectors consider the 1795 #5 and #6 struck on planchets cut from error large cents to be subvarieties, but the same planchet source for half cents dated 1797 and 1800 is not yet accorded subvariety status. Neither does weight explain the different treatment of these years. Cohen does not consider planchets cut from Talbot Allum & Lee to be grounds for considering coins struck on them to be of a subvariety, but Breen does. The prevailing practice seems to follow Cohen. And while both authors accord subvariety status to 1795 half cents struck over error large cents, neither does so to those struck over error half cents Breen lists the 1856 copper-nickel pattern as a subvariety. Cohen does not, relegating it to his category of "other half cents." And their different treatment of proof-only issues is well known. The intentional creation of differences, as opposed to errors, does not explain the differing subvariety treatment of undertypes of varying kinds and dates. Different edge lettering, or its presence or absence, always creates a subvariety, but some of the other accepted subvarieties listed above do not earn their status in that way. So, what are the criteria for subvariety status? Should consistency or custom rule? Should these thin planchet lettered edge half cents be regarded as subvarieties 1794 C9b, 1795 C1b, and 1795 C2c? How say you now, EAC members?

I would welcome all input on these or other related questions, either through the pages of Penny-Wise, by mail to PO Box 14020, St. Louis, Mo. 63178, or by e-mail addressed to halfcent@aol,com.

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Save – reload
Italics
Insert
Correct
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Brob is ex Cohen #42

94.96.1	80.7q1	1632	Jon Kerr	
2	87.2	1701	"	
3	85.6	1910	Mike Bristow	
95.16.1	91.5	1233	JRM 8/18/82 ANA swap – 96's (?)	
2	92.7	1712	Don Val	
3	77.3	1730	Brob Cohen	
4	95.7	1923	Grellman – Dooley	1/11/97 #794
2c.1	81.1	1632	J.L	
	81.6	1919	EAC 97 #53	
	wide			